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Camps in the Rockies, or, Adventures Among the Trappers.

By Captain Marcy Hunter, U. S. A.

The old foes come to an understanding over a cup of coffee.

CAMPS IN THE ROCKIES;

—OR,—

Adventures Among the Trappers.

BY CAPTAIN MARCY HUNTER, U. S. A.

CHAPTER I.

A SOLITARY VOYAGER. DECOY. A STRUGGLE.

It was drawing towards night, and the long shadows of the tall rocks and the cottonwood trees stretched far towards the East, giving to the flowing glade a deeper hue of green, yellow and purple.

In the centre of the grassy plat stood a youth who might have seen twenty-three summers and winters, tall and well proportioned, but with his complexion a little embrowned by travel. Yet, he did not, in all respects resemble one of the hunters or trappers of that region.

It is true that he carried a rifle and that he wore a hunting-shirt; but he was not wholly equipped like an adventurer of the far West; and, when he leaned upon his piece and fixed his eyes on the peak of the mountain just visible through a narrow opening of the otherwise compact forest, the intelligence that beamed in his eyes and lit up his countenance seemed to speak of other things than raccoon skins, buffalo meat, and possible-sacks.

What this youth was doing in the close vicinity of the Rocky Mountains would have been a ready question for the curious, had not a sketch-book and several crayons lay upon a small, flat rock near him.

Yet, could it be that this youth had left a good home, and civilized friends and connexions, merely for the purpose of taking views among the wild glens and gorget whither his footsteps were, apparently, tending?

Every movement of the young stranger, every glance of his eye, denoted a man of birth and fortune.

He was, certainly, unused to the ways of the great Nor' West, and, therefore, liable to fall into difficulty not only with the red men, but also with some of the lawless and roving bands, who, at that time, infested the particular region where we now find him.

Then, what was his business in that part of the country?

Such might have been the thoughts of another spectator who, from the top of a pointed rock, looked down upon our mysterious traveller.

This was a savage plentifully daubed with war paint, who perceived at a glance that the youth was not an habitue of the forest.

Dressed in the usual garb of a chief, cap of feathers and spangled toga, this man had, however, nothing noble in his bearing

His stature was short and his features were coarse, while his general aspect denoted rather a spy or a sneak than a warrior.

After having gazed a long time at the youth, who seemed buried in his own reflections, the chief slowly descended from the rock and approached his quarry.

The young man turned his head at the sound of footsteps, and started when he saw a painted Indian so near him.

He was about raising his rifle, when the chief held out his hand and pronounced the word "*Isimus!*" which signifies "Brother!"

Catching his meaning more by his look and manner than by any knowledge which he had of the Indian tongue, the youth made a few steps in the direction of his new acquaintance, and shook his hand in a friendly but not very cordial manner.

The Indian signified by signs, mingled with unintelligible words, that his camp lay at no great distance, and that the youth would be hospitably welcomed if he chose to spend the night there.

The traveller looked at the Indian sharply, and seemed to doubt the policy of accepting his invitation; but, at length, reflecting perhaps, that there would be more danger in refusing than in accepting the proffered hospitality, the young man expressed his acquiescence with gestures which were, no doubt, more expressive than sincere!

The savage seemed much gratified, and led the stranger several miles through the forest before they discerned the glimmering lights of the Indian villag

Then, the chief made a peculiar sound, somewhat resembling the cry of a night-bird, and a dozen forms rose from the bushes on the right hand and on the left.

Without a moment's hesitation, the traveller stepped back two paces, and quick as a flash, levelled his rifle at the chief and fired.

The savage had not time even to grasp his tomahawk, so sudden was the movement of the stranger.

The rifle-ball went right to the heart of the Indian chief, who, springing into the air, with a piercing yell, fell dead at the feet of the youth.

The yell of fury which burst from the throats of the savages, as they rushed upon their solitary antagonist, echoed loudly through the forest—nay, was it an *echo*?

That question was soon answered, when, greatly to the astonishment of the youth, the crack of several rifles was heard, and the sound which he had mistaken for an echo, proved to be the shout of a body of whites in his immediate vicinity.

By this time the foremost savage had aimed a blow at the head of the youth with his tomahawk, and it might have reached its object, as the young man was assaulted both before and behind, had not a ball from the attacking party of whites struck the arm of the savage and caused him to drop his weapon.

The young traveler knew nothing of the men who had come to his relief, but he perceived they were whites, and, therefore, he struck right and left with his clubbed rifle, while the long knives of his reseuers gleamed in the beams of the rising moon, and the hot blood of his foes spouted, more than once, into his face.

The yells of the savages soon began to diminish, while the shouts of white men were louder and more frequent.

It was just then that the tawny face of an Indian approached near that of the youth; but, as he lifted his rifle to strike him, his arm was arrested by a powerful grasp and the words were hissed in his ear: "Down your weapon, old hoss! He's not one of the unsarcumcised jineration, I allow."

"A friendly Indian?" said the traveller; "ah! 'tis well you told me, or I'd soon have sent him after his countrymen."

"They're all gone under now," continued the other; "it's lucky that we got on your trail, or they'd ha' had you on the roasing-spit afore this time."

True enough; the coast was clear, and there seemed to be not an Indian left except the friendly one whom they called Wyachunk. Several men dressed like trappers and hunters came up now, and congratulated the young man on his deliverance from overwhelming odds.

After a slight pause which gave the young man time to tell who he was and where he was bound, and to give some account of his adventures thus far,—of which opportunity the youth did not avail himself, but maintained a profound silence—the powerful woodsman who had just addressed him, said—

"Yonder is the village of these red devils. They must ha' heered the skrimmage, and thar's a lot on 'em on the way heah before this time. With yer leave, stranger, we'll travel for the present, and ef you see fit to take up with our cavallade, we've a mule at yer service."

"But, which way are you travelling?" demanded the young man.

"Almost anywhares for the present, but we're jinerally p'inting our noses towards a fort that lays off heah to the

northard and westard. But, for the present, it is pritty considerible to our advantage to snake our corpses out o' this yere pertic'la spot, whar we've left the marks of our little difficulty with the redskin."

The party then set on a brisk trot towards the mountains, and as nothing remarkable occurred on that night and the next day, our traveler had ample opportunity to discover that the man whose friendly gripe prevented him from killing Wyachunk was called Black Butcher; another went by the name of Foxtail Ben; another was called Blue Cap, a Frenchman who spoke very poor English was named Pierre Cassecon; and another was called Ralph the Roarer; while our traveling artist gave his name Arthur Lispenard.

As they journeyed on towards the mountains, on the day after the fight with the Indians, the curiosity of Black Butcher almost overcame nor'west politeness.—He could not conceive what Arthur Lispenard, the artist was doing so far from the habitations of civilized man.

More than once, Black Butcher gave a slight hint to Lispenard that greater openness on his part would be duly appreciated; but, the party made their bivouac, and the worthy trapper sank to rest that night without having had his curiosity gratified.

CHAPTER II.

A BLUNDERBUSS. DANGEROUS TIMES.

On the afternoon of the next day, a singular sight presented itself. Black Butcher, Foxtail Ben, Blue Cap, Pierre Cassecon, Ralph the Rover, and Arthur Lispenard, were huddled together behind a small bush in such a confused way that a spectator might have supposed that Ralph the Rover's head belonged to Black Butcher's body, and the artist's shoulders to Blue Cap's head, and their respective legs and arms to no one individually, but to all collectively in a miscellaneous sort of way.

The fact is that the bush was almost too small to conceal them; and being a solitary bush in the midst of a plain half a mile in extent, they had to make the most of it, and the least of themselves.

This bundle of humanity was staring through the bush, with all its eyes, and they were staring at a wolf—an enormous wolf—that was slowly walking away from the bush behind which they were ensconced! It was a very singular wolf indeed—one that was calculated to excite surprise in the breast even of trappers. There was something radically wrong with that wolf, especially about the legs. Its ears and head were all right, and it had a tail, a very good tail for a wolf: but there was a strange unaccountable lump under its neck, and its forelegs bent the wrong way at the knees, and it seemed to have long feet trailing behind its hind legs, besides being otherwise misshapen. The mystery is explained when we state that this wolf was none other than Wyachunk, down on his hands and knees, with a wolf-skin over his back, and the artist's blunderbuss-pistol in his hand. He was creeping cautiously toward a herd of six or seven buffaloes that chanced to be feeding quietly there, quite unconscious of the near proximity of so dangerous an enemy.

"I hope the old pistol won't miss fire," whispered Blue Cap, as he observed that the wolf paused, evidently for the purpose of examining the priming.

"I hope," added Ralph the Rover, "that the Injun won't miss his aim. He be'nt used to pistols."

"Never fear," said Foxtail Ben, with a quiet grin. "If he aims within a yard o' the brute he's sure to hit, for I loaded the old blunderbuss myself, an' its crammed nigh to the muzzle with all sorts o' things, includin' stones."

At this Black Butcher stared, and said, emphatically, "It'll bust!" Lispenard felt and looked uneasy, but Ralph shook his head.

"Them old things," said he, "never bust. I've been forty years, off an' on, in these parts, an' I've always obsarved that old irons o' that sort *don't* bust; cause why? they'd ha' busted w'en they wos new, if they'd bin goin' to bust at all. The fact is they *can't* bust. They're too stupid even for that."

"How comes it," inquired Lispenard, "that the buffaloes are not afraid of a wolf? I have been led to understand that wolves are the inveterate enemies of buffaloes, and that they often attack them."

To this question Foxtail Ben, whose head was in close proximity to that of the artist, replied—

"Ay, the sneakin' brutes will attack a single wounded or worn-out old buffalo, when it falls behind the herd, and when there are lots o' their low-minded comrades along with 'em; but the buffaloes don't care a straw for a single wolf, as ye may see now if ye pay attention to wot Wyachunk's doin'."

The artist became silent on observing that the Indian had approached to within about pistol-range of the buffalo without attracting particular attention, and that he was in the act of taking aim at its shoulder. Immediately a sharp click caused the buffalo to look up and apprised the onlookers that the faithless weapon had missed fire; again Wyachunk pulled the trigger and with a like result. By this time the buffalo, having become alarmed, started off at a run. Once more the click was heard; then the wolf, rising on its hind legs, coolly walked back to its comrades behind the bush, while the herd of buffaloes, galloped furiously away.

The Indian solemnly stalked up to Lispenard and presented the pistol to him with such an expression of grave contempt on his countenance that Foxtail Ben burst into an irresistible fit of laughter; thereby relieving his own feelings and giving, as it were, direction to those of the others, most of whom were in the unpleasant condition of being undecided whether to laugh or cry.

To miss a buffalo was not indeed a new, or in ordinary circumstances, a severe misfortune; but to miss one after having been three days without food, with the exception of a little unpalatable wolf's flesh, was not an agreeable, much less an amusing incident.

"I'll tell ye wot it is," said Ralph the Roarer, slapping his thigh violently and emphasizing his words as if to imply that nobody had ever told anybody "wot" anything "wos" since the world began up to that time, "I'll tell ye wot it is, I won't stand this sort o' thing no longer."

"It's most unfortunate," sighed the artist, who thoroughly identified himself with his pistol, and felt as much ashamed of it as if the fault had been his own.

"Wall, lads," observed Black Butcher, drawing forth his pipe as the only source of comfort in these trying circumstances, and filling it with scrupulous care, "it ain't of no use gettin' growcely about it, I guess. There air more buffaloes then them wot's gone; mayhap we'll spliflicate one before we gits more waspisher."

"It may, perhaps, be necessary to explain that the speaker's last word referred to the unusually small waists of the party, the result of a pretty long fast.

"I'll tell ye what it is," said Foxtail Ben, advancing toward Ralph-the-Rover, with a swagger, and drawing his hunting-knife, "I quite agree with Black Butcher's sentiments. I don't mean to allow myself to get any more waspisher, so I vote that we cut Ralph up and have a feed. What say you, comrades?"

"All right," replied Ralph, laying bare his broad chest as if to receive the knife, "only, p'raps, ye'll allow me to eat the first slice off myself afore ye begin, cause I couldn't well have my share afterwards, d'ye see? But, now I think on't, I'd be rather a tough morsel. Young meat's gin'rally thought the tenderest. Wot say ye to cuttin' up Ben first, an' tryin' me nixt?"

"If you'll only wait, lads," said Blue Cap, "till Mr. Lispenard gits a new flint into his pistol, we'll shoot the victim instead o' cuttin' him up. It'll be quicker, you know."

"Hah! non," cried Pierre Casscon, leaping a few inches off the ground, under the impulse of a new idea, "I vill

show to you vat ve vill do. Ve vill each cot hoff von finger. Blue Cap, he vill begin vid de thomb, et so on till it come to me, and I vill cot hoff mine leet finger. Each vill devour the finger of de oder, an' so ve shall have von dinner vi'out committing mordor—ha! vat say you?"

As Lispenard had by this time arranged the lock of his pistol and reprimed it, the hungry travellers resumed their weary march without coming to a decision upon this delicate point.

It happened that, during the last few days, the land over which they traveled being somewhat barren, small game had become scarce, and the large game could not be approached near enough to be shot with such weapons as the artist's antiquated pistols; and as the party possessed nothing better in the shape of a projectile they had failed to procure supplies. They had now, however, again reached a rich country, and had succeeded in trapping a large wolf, under the skin of which Wyachunk had made, as we have seen, an unsuccessful effort to shoot a buffalo. Soon after this failure the party came to a ridge of gravelly soil that stretched across the plain like a wave.

The plain, or small prairie, to which we refer was in the midst of a most lovely scene. The earth was carpeted with rich green grass, in which the wild flowers nestled like gems. The ground was undulating, yet so varied in its formations that the waves and mounds did not prevent the eyes of the travelers ranging over a vast tract of country, even when they were down among the hollows; and when they had ascended the backs of the ridges, they could cast a wide glance over a scene of mingled plain and wood, lake and river, such as is never seen except in earth's remotest wilds, where man has not attempted to adorn the face of Nature with the exuberances of his own wonderful invention.

Far away on the horizon the jagged forms and snowy peaks of the Rocky Mountains rose clear and sharp against the sky. For some days past the trappers had sighted this stupendous "backbone" of the far west, yet so slowly did they draw near that Foxtail Ben and Blue Cap, in their impatience, almost believed they were a range of phantom hills, which ever receded from them as they advanced.

On reaching the summit of the gravelly ridge, Blue Cap looked along it with an earnest, searching gaze.

"Wot's ado now?" inquired Ralph the Rover.

"There ought to be prairie-hens here," replied the other.

"Oh! do stand still, just as you are, men," cried the artist, enthusiastically flopping down on a stone and drawing forth his sketch-book, "you'll make such a capital fore ground."

The trappers smiled and took out their pipes, having now learned from experience that smoking was not detrimental to a sketch—rather the reverse.

"Cut away, Cassecon," said Ralph, "an' take a look at the edge o' yon bluff o' poplars and willows. I've observed that prairie-hens is fond o' sich places. You'll not be missed out o' the pictur', bein' only a small objict, d'ye see, besides an ogly one."

The jovial Canadian acknowledged the compliment with a smile and obeyed the command, leaving his companions to smoke their pipes and gaze with quiet complacency upon the magnificent scene. Doubtless, much of their satisfaction resulted from the soothing influence of tobacco on their empty stomachs.

"I say," whispered Black Butcher, removing his pipe and puffing from his lips a large cloud of smoke, which rolled upwards in the form of a white ring, "I say, Ralph, I guess it's past my comprehension what he means by a foreground. How does *we* make a capital foreground?"

Ralph looked at his companion in silence for a few seconds; then he removed his pipe, pursed his lips, frowned heavily, looked at the ground, and repeated slowly, "How does *we* make a capital foreground?"

Ralph the Roarer nodded.

"Ay, that's it." Ralph the Roarer resumed his pipe a few seconds, and then said with an air of the utmost profundity,—

"Don't you know?"

"No, I don't."

"Wot? Nothin' about it wotiver?"

"Nothin' wotsomediver."

"Hem, that's okard," said Ralph, once more applying to his pipe; "'cause, d'ye see, its most 'orrible difficult to explain a thing to a feller as don't know nothin' wotiver about it If ye only had the smallest guess o'—"

"Wall, come, I does know *somethin'* about it," interrupted Black Butcher.

"What's that?" inquired Ralph, brightening up.

"I calc'late that I knows for certain it ain't got no place wotever in my onderstandin'."

"Hah!" exclaimed Ralph. "Come, then, I'll do my best for to explain it t'ye. Here's wot it is. D'ye see Mr. Lispenard, there?"

"Yes I does"

"An' d'ye see yerself?"

"Wall, I does," replied Black Butcher, looking complacently down at his huge limbs.

"Good; then d'ye see the ground over there?" continued Ralph, pointing with his pipe to the Rocky Mountains.

Black Butcher nodded.

"Now then," said Ralph, in those deep earnest tones with which men usually attempt to probe the marrow of some desperately knotty question; "Now, then, when Mr. Lispenard's a drawin' of, an' tries to look at the ground over there, you an' me comes *before* the ground, d'ye see; an' so we're, as ye may say, *before-grounds*. But men wot studies human natur' an' langwidges, d'ye see, comes for to know that words is always gitten onnecessary bits chopped off 'em—sometimes at one end, sometimes at t'other. So they tuck off the B, d'ye see, an' made it foreground, and that's how we come to be foregrounds."

"Oh!" said Black Butcher, with the vacant air of a man who feels himself as wise at the termination as he was at the beginning of an explanation.

"Yes," resumed Ralph, "that's how it is. I must confess for my part, that I don't 'xactly see the advantage o' us in that light I should ha' thought it would ha' been better to make us stand to one side, d'ye see, and let him see how the land lies. But there's no accountin' for taste in this wurld—I've observed that iver since I was three fut two."

Having delivered himself of this graphic exposition of an abstruse subject, Ralph relapsed into silence, and the whole party continued for some minutes in a profound reverie. From this felicitous condition they were awakened by the sudden appearance of Pierre Cassecon, who darted out of the poplar bluff and made toward them at the top of his speed. He uttered no cry, but, on coming near enough to permit of his features being clearly seen, it was observed that his eyes were eagerly wide open, and that his mouth was engaged in the formation of words. A second or two more, and he was near enough to be heard uttering the word "Redskins" in a hoarse whisper.

"Ho! boy, wot is't?" cried Ralph, in an equally hoarse whisper.

"Ba—Indians, hah! Indians," cried Pierre, panting violently as he came up; "Where be de leet gun? Ho! Monsieur Lispenard, out vid it."

"Where saw ye them?" asked Blue Cap, seizing the two pistols, and examining the priming.

"Jist oder side of de bluff. Ver' close to de bushes. Queek! queek! vite! mon garcon, you is so dreffful slow."

The latter part of this sentence was addressed to Wyachunk, who was quietly putting on his wolf-skin. Although too slow for the hasty spirit of the Frenchman, the Indian was quick enough for all useful purposes. In three minutes he was in the clump of poplar trees behind which the redskins were reported to be skulking, and in another minute he was out upon the plain creeping toward the enemy, while the rest of the party were again

huddled together behind a bush, looking on with deep interest and breathless attention.

Gradually and slowly the Indian crept toward the strangers, pausing and snuffing about from time to time as if he were a veritable wolf in search of something to eat. At last he had approached near enough to the Indians to attract their attention, but scarcely near enough to make sure of bringing one down. The wary creatures looked up inquiringly for a moment, but, seeing only a solitary wolf, they scorned to take further notice of him, and went on smoking and talking.

For a moment, Wyachunk seemed disposed to risk a shot; but, upon second consideration, he decided that, impeded as he was by his wolfish disguise, he had better wait till he could assume his natural shape before he brought the foe upon him.

Wyachunk crept back to his fellows and reported that the Indians numbered about fifty.

They had evidently come from the village, having scented the late encounter, and had kept on the trail of the white party. How long they had discovered the presence of the whites in their near vicinity, if indeed they had discovered it at all, it was impossible to say.

Black Butcher listened to the account given by Wyachunk, and then standing up and leaning on his rifle, he addressed his comrades: "Heyer's that never knowd any good come from backin' out whar redskins war consarned. But, whar thar's ten to one, it's a kind o' owdacious to draw a bead on the terrificacious varmints. Ef any he floats a diff'rent 'pinion, let him open his face."

"It wud be almighty mean to retreat in open day," said Blue Cap, "and raise my h'ar, but my stomick is up for a fight, and I'm ready to go in."

Ralph the Roarer, Foxtail Ben, and Black Butcher then turned instinctively to Lispenard the artist, and found him attentively listening to a description which Wyachunk was giving him of the Indians, and he seemed very much struck by what the scout told him of one of them—that he wore a red feather on his head.

"What say you?" demanded Black Butcher; "are yer for a battle with these fellers?"

Lispenard knitted his brows and looked puzzled.

He remained silent so very long that Black Butcher grew impatient.

"Stranger," said the trapper; "I don't float a dispersition to pry into the affairs of other people, but it's very 'stornary that we knows so little about yer, wich is nothin' consequential, leastwise when thar's no difficilty in the way. But yer see when thar's a inimy in front, we loiks to know who we're dealin' with. So, tell us yer mind."

"You ought to remember," returned the artist, "that our fust acquaintance arose from my shooting down an Indian chief."

"I remember that a heap," broke in Black Butcher; "and ef yer say fight, I've no consarn with any of the rest of yer hist'ry; but, ef yer vindicate a retreat, then I'd like to know why, and whar'fore you've come into the timber."

"My history can be nothing to you," answered Arthur Lispenard; "but, with regard to fighting or not fighting these Indians, settle that among yourselves, as I believe the time has come for me to leave you and go about my own particular business."

"Non, Monsieur," criéd Pierre Cassecon; "not no man passer nobody ven it vas te vot you call? six o'cloek of de bataille—vot you call?"

"You mean the *eve* of battle," said Lispenard; "you think I go to betray you ——"

"Von spy-glass! Oui, Monsieur; you vash von spy-glass—eh?"

"A spy!" cried Lispenard; "I am no spy, I swear to you; but I have an affair of my own to attend to which forbids me to engage in this encounter with the redmen. Let me advise you, therefore, to withdraw while there is time. You have no ——"

Lispenard's speech was cut short by an arrow which passed within an inch of his nose, and carried away a lock of his hair.

At the same moment, the war-whoop of fifty savages rang through the forest.

"I have no choice now," said the artist, unslinging his rifle, and taking steady aim at a gigantic savage who came at him with uplifted tomahawk.

Before he could fire, however, the Indian hurled his tomohawk which struck Black Butcher on the forehead and knocked him down.

Fortunately, however, it was but the flat side of the weapon that struck the brave trapper, and he soon regained his feet; when with his big hunting knife, he ripped up the abdomen of the savage and let out his bowels.

But, the little band of whites attacked as they were, unexpectedly and at disadvantage, were soon surrounded by their savage foes.

The assailed party fought valiantly, however.

In the midst of the fray, Lispenard saw Wyachunk astride of one of their fallen foes and about to tear his scalp from his head.

Lispenard rushed up and requested Wyachunk to spare his life. It was the savage with the red feather in his hair.

It was in vain that the artist interposed. Already the knife was inserted. Wyachunk did not even seem to hear the request, for which he may well be excused as the shouts of the trappers and the yells of the redskins were deafening at that moment.

The case of the white men seemed desperate, although several of the enemy had already fallen, when Black Butcher in a moment of sudden frenzy, exerted all his strength, and tearing up a small sapling by the roots, swung it around him with such fury that it kept the Indians at a distance long enough for the whites to load their pieces.

In an instant, a general discharge took place; the savages tumbled one upon another as the balls took effect.

The whites then rushed upon the disordered foe with clubbed rifles, and they fled yelling over the plain, leaving half their number dead and wounded on the field.

It was now discovered that our little party had suffered some during the contest; but the artist, who appeared well acquainted with the healing art, applied a few simples to the wounds of his comrades and all were in a fair way of doing well when they set the w eh and retired to rest in a hollow of the rock that night.

There were not wanting hints, before the trappers closed their eyes in sleep, that a visit might be expected from the Indians before morning, as the village was at no great distance.

But nothing disturbed the repose of the little party, and all but the watchful sentinel slept soundly till the sun gilded the mountain peaks.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCOUTS.

THE sun was high, scattering the golden clouds in the bright sky, gilding the hill-tops, flooding the plains, vivifying vegetable life, and gladdening the whole animal creation, when on the following morning, our wearied trappers raised their heads and began to think of breakfast.

To do these trappers justice, however, we must add that their looks, when they became wide enough awake to take full cognizance of the scenery, indicated the presence of thoughts and emotions of a more elevated character, though from the nature of their training from infancy they wanted words to express their feelings.

It was otherwise with Lispenard and the Frenchman. Their exclamations, the instant they arose, showed that

both their hearts were keenly alive to the good and the beautiful which surrounded them.

During the course of that day the trappers walked about thirty miles. Toward the afternoon they came to a large river, along the banks of which they pursued their way, led by Blue Cap, who seemed as familiar with the country as if he had dwelt there from infancy. The old trapper's kindly visage was lighted up with a smile of recognition, ever and anon, when some new and striking feature of the landscape opened up to view, as if he had met with and were greeting some personal friend. He spoke occasionally in a low tone to Foxtail Ben, who kept usually close to his side, and pointed to spots which were associated in his memory with adventures of various kinds. But Blue Cap's observations were few. He preferred to listen to the conversation of his comrades, as they plodded steadily along, enlivening their march with many an anecdote and legend.

At last Blue Cap called a halt, and gazed inquiringly around him; as if in search of some object.

"Wot's up?" inquired Ralph, earnestly.

"It was hereabouts, somewhere," muttered Blue Cap, to himself rather than to his friend, then added quickly, as he threw down his pack, "Ay, there it is—never touched. Now that's what I call luck."

"*Wot's* luck?" inquired Big Butcher.

"Ah, dat is de keevestion," added Cassecon, with a look of surprise.

"You must know, lads," said Blue Cap, turning to his comrades, who observed his movements with considerable astonishment; "you must know, lads, there was an old chap who once trapped beavers up in them parts——"

"Oh! it's a hanikdot," interrupted Black Butcher, "then I guess we'd as well sot down."

"It ain't a story," said Blue Cap; "nor I don't think it can even be called an anecdote. Well, this old chap that once trapped beaver in them parts came down to Duck Hollow settlement one year with a load o' furs, sold 'em all off, took a ragin' fever, and died." Blue Cap paused, and gazed dreamily at the ground.

"I say," observed Ralph, seriously, "aint that wot ye call raither a short hanikdot—not much in it, eh?"

"But before he died," resumed Blue Cap, without noticing the interruption, "he sent for me an' said—'Blue Cap, I'm goin' onder, an' I've got some propeety as I don't want lost. Ye know Beaver Creek?' 'Yes,' says I, 'every fut of it.' 'Wel, then,' says he, 'there's a spot there with three mounds on the right side o' the Creek, and a tall poplar in front of 'em.' 'I know it,' says I. 'Well, w'en I last come from that part,' says he, 'I made a *cache* at the foot o' that poplar, an' put one or two things in, which it 'ud be a pity to lose—so I give 'em to you, Blue Cap. I was chased by Injuns at the place, so I couldn't stop to bring 'em away, d'ye see?' 'An' what were the things ye put there?' said I.

But he gave me no answer; his mind began to wander, and he never spoke sense again. Now, lads, this is Beaver Creek, and there stands the poplar in front o' the three mounds."

Blue Cap pointed to the tree as he spoke, and the others

Arming themselves with strong staves, they began to dig away the earth at the roots of the poplar.

After a few minutes' hard work, Ralph the Roarer rose to wipe the perspiration from his brow, and said,—

"Wot for didn't ye tell us o' this before, Blue Cap?"

"Because I wasn't sure the *cache* might not have bin discovered long ago, and I didn't want to risk disappointin' ye."

"Hallo! here's *somethin'*," exclaimed Black Butcher, as the point of the stake with which he tore up the earth struck against some hard substance.

"Have a care, boy," cried Ralph, stooping down and clearing away the earth with his hands. "P'raps it's easy broken. No—why—it's a keg!"

"So it am," cried Cassecon; "p'raps it am poudre."

At this moment Black Butcher and Ralph gave the keg a violent tug and disentombed it,an operation which proved Pierre's surmise to be wrong, for the shake showed that the contents were liquid. In a moment the plug was driven in, and Ralph, putting his nose to the hole, inhaled the result. He drew back with a look of surprise, and said—

"Brandy!"

"Ha! here's one oder ting," cried Cassecon, laying hold of a bundle and dragging it to light. "Vat can dis be."

The question was soon answered; the string was cut, the leather cover unrolled, and a considerable quantity of tobacco was disclosed to the view of the trappers, whose looks showed pretty clearly that this latter discovery was much more agreeable than the former.

After digging deep all round the tree, they came to the conclusion that this was all that the *cache* contained.

"Now," said Ralph, after some talk in reference to their newly-found treasure, "wot's to be done wid dis here keg o' brandy? As for the baccy, we'll carry that along with us, of course, an' if Master Blue Cap's a liberal feller, we'll help him to smoke it. But the brandy keg's heavy, an' to say truth, I'm not much inclined for it. I never wos fond o' fire-water."

"If you'll allow me, friends, to suggest," said Arthur, whose experience among trappers in other regions had convinced him that spirits was a most undesirable commodity; "I would recomend that you should throw this brandy away. I never saw good come of it. We do not require it for health, neither do we for sickness. Let us throw it away, my friends; it's a dangerous and deceitful foe."

"Mais, monsieur," interposed Pierre, with a rueful countenance; you speak the trooth; but though hims be dangeraux an' ver' bad for drink oftin, yet ven it be cold vedder, it *doo* varm de cokils of de heart!"

Black Butcher laughed vociferously at this—"I guess Pierre's right," said he, "it 'ud be a powerful shame to fling it away."

"Well, lads," said Blue Cap, "it's evident that we can't drink it just now, for it would unsteady our hands for the work we have to do this night. It's also clear we can't carry it with us on a war expedition; so I propose that we should put it where we found it an' come back for it when we've done wi' the redskins."

This plan was finally agreed to; the keg was reburied at the foot of the poplar, and the party continued their journey, carrying the much-prized tobacco along with them.

The sun was still blazing above the mountains in the west, tinging their snowy spires with rosy red, when the trappers came upon the indication of the neighborhood of Indians in the shape of recent footprints and cuttings in the woods. A large canoe was also found lying bottom up on the bank of the creek. This Blue Cap examined, and found it to be in good condition, although from the marks in the vicinity, it was evident that it had not been recently used.

Men who spend their lives in the backwoods of America are celebrated for the closeness with which they observe every object and circumstance which happens to pass within the range of their perceptions. This habit and acuteness of observation is the result of necessity. The trapper and the Red Indian are alike dependent very much on this faculty for their sustenance and for their safety.

Surrounded as they are by perils of every kind, their eyes and ears are constantly on the alert, as they pass through the pathless wilderness on the hunt or on the war trail. No object within the range of vision is passed with indifference. Every thing is carefully yet quickly noted—the breaking of a twig, the crushing of a blade of grass, or the footprint of man or beast. Hence the backwoodsman acquires the habit of turning all things in his path to ac-

count, or notes them in case they should, by any possibility, be required by him at a future time.

Blue Cap had no definite object in view when, with the assistance of Foxtail Ben, he lifted the canoe and placed it in the stream to ascertain that it was water-tight, and then replaced it on the bank with the paddles close beside it. But he had a general idea, founded on experience, that a good canoe was a useful thing in many supposable circumstances, and that it was as well to know where such an article was to be found.

"We shall have to go cautiously now," said he, before resuming the march. "The Injuns are not far off, as ye may see by yonder thin line o' smoke that rises above the trees on the mountain side. If they are the men we seek, they're sharp as foxes, so we'll have to step like the painter."

Lispenard looked up quickly at the last word—then he smiled the next moment as he remembered that the panther was thus styled by trappers.

Proceeding cautiously forward in single file, they at length gained a spot beyond which they could not advance without running the risk of being discovered. Here another halt was made, and here it was agreed that Blue Cap should advance alone, near enough to ascertain whether the Indians, whose camp they were approaching were actually the scamps who had robbed them of their horses. The old trapper was about to set forward when Arthur stopped him.

"Methinks, old man," said he, "it were well that I should accompany you on this expedition, which I foresee is one of no little danger; and it seems to me right and fitting that I should share it along with you. Besides, two are better than one in a struggle, whether mental or physical."

Blue Cap looked a little perplexed. He did not like to tell the artist that he was totally unfit to make a stealthy approach to an Indian camp, yet he felt that the danger of failure would be increased tenfold if he allowed him to make the attempt; but Arthur pleaded so earnestly, and withall, so resolutely, that he at length consented, on condition of his doing nothing but what he was desired to do, and keeping as quiet as a mouse. This the artist promised to do, and the two accordingly set forth, armed with their knives and the two pistols. Arthur also carried his sword. The rest of the party were to remain in ambush until the return of the others.

During the first part of their advance through the wood Arthur trod as softly and carefully as an Indian, and watched every motion of his companion, who led him down into a ravine which conducted them to within a few hundred yards of the camp. From the absence of such noises as the barking of dogs and shouts of children, the old trapper conjectured that this must be either a party of trappers or a war party of Indians. A few minutes creeping on hands and knees through the underwood brought them to a spot whence the camp could be seen, and showed that in the latter conjecture he was right. The red warriors, forty in number, were seated in a circle round their watch-fire smoking their tomahawks in moody silence.

To the eye of Arthur they all seemed to be lost in dreamy reverie, but Blue Cap observed, with a feeling of anxiety, that he who seemed to be their chief sat in that peculiar attitude which indicates intense attention. Laying his hand on Arthur's shoulder, the old man said in the faintest possible whisper—

"Yonder sits the thief."

Arthur at once recognized Big Snake, the Indian chief, so he nodded his head, and looked excited, but wisely refrained from speech, lest his voice should be overheard.

Blue Cap shook his head. "The thief," said he, in a tone that was scarcely audible, "has heard us: I see by his face that he suspects he has heard *something*, and he knows it was not the falling of a leaf. If we break a twig now we're done for."

Blue Cap meant this to be a salutary caution to his companion, which would insure a noiseless retreat. To men of his own stamp it would have been useful, but he little knew the peculiar temperament of his friend.

It is wonderful, however, what necessity will enable men to do. Arthur did creep after his friend, back toward the spot where the rest of his party lay, as softly and noiselessly as if he had been bred to the work from infancy.

On regaining the edge of the ravine, they rose and advanced in a crouching posture. Then Arthur sighed and felt that imminent danger was over. Alas! that feeling of partial security cost him dear. The step that succeeded the sigh was a careless one. His foot caught in a projecting root, and next moment he went headforemost into the centre of a decayed bush with a crackling crash that was absolutely appalling in the circumstances.

Blue Cap cast upon the luckless man one glance of horror, and uttering the words, "Run for your life!" dashed down the bank, and coursed along the bottom like a hare. At the same moment that terrific yell, which has so often chilled the heart's blood of men and women in those western wilds, rang through the forest, telling that they were discovered, and that the Indians were in pursuit.

Arthur kept close to the heels of the old trapper at first, but before he had run fifty yards he tripped and fell again. On attempting to rise he was seized and thrown violently to the ground by an Indian warrior. Looking back and observing this, Blue Cap turned at once, like a hare doubling on its course, and rushed to the rescue; but before he reached his friend he was surrounded by a dozen yelling Indians. At the foremost of these he levelled his pistol, but the faithless weapon missed fire, and he was in the act of hurling it at his adversary, when a blow from behind felled him to the ground.

While this was going on, the trappers were bounding to the succor of their comrades. When they came to the field of action and saw neither of their friends (for they had been borne swiftly away), and beheld an overwhelming band of armed savages rushing toward them, they at once perceived that strength or courage could avail them nothing in such an unequal conflict; so they turned and fled, scattering themselves among the bushes so as to divert pursuit as much as possible.

Ralph and Pierre were the only two who kept together. These made for the spot where the canoe had been left, but the latter outran the former so quickly that he was soon lost to view ahead of him. In a few minutes Ralph gained the bank of the stream, and seized the end of the canoe. To his amazement Pierre was nowhere to be seen. But he had no time for thought, for at that moment he was discovered by two Indians who ran toward him. The canoe was launched, and a paddle seized in an instant, but the trusty trapper was loath, even in his extremity, to push off while his comrade might be in danger.

"Ho! Pierre! Pierre Cassecon;" he shouted. "Quick, lad; yer too late o' most, ho!"

Grinding his teeth in an agony of anxiety, he made a sudden rush at the foremost Indian, who little dreamed of such an attack, and hit him with the paddle with all his force.

The savage dropped like a stone, and the paddle flew into a dozen splinters. This was a foolish act on the part of Ralph the Roarer, for the second Indian was now close upon him, and seeing the fate of his companion, he stopped short, and hastily fitted an arrow to his bow. Just then several of the savages burst from the wood with fierce cries. There was no time to lose. Ralph turned, pushed off the canoe, and leaped in as an arrow grazed his neck.

The bold trapper's condition seemed hopeless; for, having broken the paddle to pieces, he could not propel his little bark out of danger. The stream was broad and rapid at that place, and swept him away swiftly. Immediately a shower of arrows fell around him, some grazing his person and piercing his clothes and the canoe, but fortunately not wounding him.

Meanwhile three of the Indians darted down stream, and throwing themselves into the current, swam out so as

to intercept the canoe as it passed. Ralph having laid down at full length in the bottom of his tiny bark to avoid the arrows which were discharged at him, did not observe these men, and the first intimation he had of what was taking place was the canoe being nearly upset, as a powerful savage laid hold of the side of it.

To draw his knife and pass it around the wrist of the Indian, so as to sever the tendons, was the work of a moment. The savage fell back with a yell of mingled rage and pain. The others seeing what had occurred, wisely turned and made for the shore. This incident was the means of saving the trapper, for the Indians, fearful of wounding their comrade, had ceased to discharge their arrows, and when they again ventured to do so, a tumultuous rapid had caught the canoe, and whirled it nearly over to the opposite shore.

Ralph watched his opportunity. As he swept near to a rocky point, he sprang toward it with all his might. He fell short, but happily the water did not reach above his knees. Next moment he sprang up the bank and stood on the edge of the underwood, where he paused and turning round, shook his clenched fist at his enemies and uttered a shout of defiance.

The disappointed Indians gave vent to a fiendish howl, and discharged a cloud of arrows, most of which fell short of their mark. Ere the last shaft had fallen harmless to the ground, Ralph had entered the forest and was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

RESCUE.

About ten minutes after making his escape from his Indian foes, Ralph seated himself on the trunk of a fallen tree and began to think upon "Number One."

"Now I'll tell you wot I'll do," continued Ralph, resuming his look of grave anxiety, as the thought of his comrades recurred to him; "I'll go up the river till I comes to opposite the place where I shoved the canoe into the water. By the time I git there it'll be dark; then I'll swum across an' foller the redskins an' save my comrades if I can. If I can't, wot then? why I'll leave the scalp of Ralph the Roarer to dangle in the smoke of a redskin's wigwam."

We have elsewhere hinted that when a Rocky Mountain trapper makes up his mind to do a certain thing he usually does it at once. Having settled the plan of his future proceedings, Ralph did not waste more time in thought or speech. He thrust his unsmoked pipe into his bosom, leaped up from the trunk of the fallen tree, and darted from the spot with such sudden promptitude, that the horrified squirrel sprang wildly into empty space and vanished from the scene forever!

For a quarter of an hour Ralph glided noiselessly through the forest, keeping a course parallel with the river. In the deepening gloom of evening, he appeared more like a spectre than a human being—so quick and agile were his motions as he flitted past the tree-stems, yet so noiseless the tread of his moccasined feet. The bushes were thick and in places tangled, compelling him to stoop and twist and diverge right and left as he sped along, but, being unencumbered with weapons or weight of any kind, he advanced so rapidly that in the short space of time we have mentioned he stood opposite to that part of the bank where the attack had been made, and below which he had been swept for a great distance in the canoe by the rapid stream.

Here he spent some time in reconnoitring the opposite bank, but without gathering much information from his observations. No symptom of the presence of human beings could be discovered. No column of smoke rising above the trees to tell of the watch-fire of white men or red. The trapper listened intently, then he bethought him, for the first time, of giving the signal which, at setting out on their journey, they had agreed to use in all circumstances of danger. It was the low howl of a wolf followed immediately by the hoot of an owl. The reply to it was to be the hoot of the owl without the cry of the wolf when danger should be imminent and extreme caution necessary, or the howl of the wolf alone if the danger should have passed away.

To the first utterance of the signal no reply was made. After waiting a few seconds, Ralph gave it forth again. Immediately after, the low howl of a wolf was heard on the opposite bank, and a figure appeared at the edge of the river. Darkness prevented the trapper ascertaining who it was; but a repetition of the cry convinced him that it could be none other than Pierre.

With a grunt of satisfaction, Ralph at once proceeded to make preparations for crossing the river. Cutting a large piece of bark from a neighboring tree, he hastily formed it into a species of dish or flat boat; then, stripping off all his garments, he tied them up in a tight bundle, and placed them in this miniature canoe; after which he plunged boldly into the stream and made for the opposite shore, pushing his little ark before him. In five minutes he had crossed, and entered into a hasty conversation with Pierre,—in low, eager tones, while pulling on his clothes.

"First of all, lad," said Ralph, laying his hand impressively on the other's shoulder, "are they all safe?—none killed?"

"Non; dey be all alive, for certain."

"I'm thankful for that—*very* thankful. Now go ahead, lad, and tell me what ye know, while I pull on my leggins."

"Vell, dey be alive, as I have say. Mais dey not live long."

Pierre Cassecon said this with such a look of woe-begone despair that Ralph paused in the midst of his dressing and said with much anxiety—"Wot's wrong! why not, lad?"

"'Cause dey vill be tortured to death demain, or de day apres de morrow. Stay, I vill tell to you all I knows. You mus' know, ven I run avay from you, I do so 'cause I know dat canoe ver' probabilie git opturned, so I come to river bank before every von. Dere is von big tree dere, so op I go like von skvirrel. You know vat come to pass apres dat. You smash de head of de Injun, aussi, you smash de paddil. Den you escape, an' de Injuns, howl vid passion! Ver' soon after dat, dey all come to de bank of river—forty of 'em, I tink—draggin' our comerades vid dem, all tied by de wrist—Blue Cap, an' Black Butcher, an' Foxtail Ben, an' Wyachunk, an' poor Monsieur Arthur. Mais, dat Monsieur Arthur, be most 'straordinary man! He terriblement frightened for every leetil ting, but him not fright von bit for big ting! Hims look at de sauvage dat hold him as if him be a lion. I do tink Monsieur Arthur would fight vell if hims obleeged.

"After good deal of consultoration an' disputerin', dey vas about for go avay; so I sit ver' still, but I move my foot von leet' morsil, an' von small leef fall to de ground. It vas ver' small leaf, but Wyachunk him see it. Ah! he be von cliver Injun. Ver' sharp in sight too! I tink him should be named Wide-avake. No von else notice it, but I see Wyachunk visper to Black Butcher. Dat man be sharp feller too. He turns hims back to de tree, nevair vonce looked up, but him burst into loud laugh, like von tondre-clap, an' cry out, 'Vell done, Cassecon! Keep close, old feller; their village is one day off toward de sun!' An' den he laugh again. Ah! ho! how my heart him jomp ven he speak my name! But de Injuns tink hims yell out to some von cross de river for him look dat vay. Vell, off dey go, and I begin to breath more easy; but ven dey git far off, I hear the voice of Black Butcher come back like far-away tondre, cryin' 'Dey're goin' to roast us alive to-morrow; look sharp!' Dat vas de last I hear. Den

de darkness come, an' den you come, an' now, vat is to come nixt?"

Poor Pierre spoke fast, and perspired very much, and looked wild and haggard, for his nature was sensitive and sympathetic and the idea of his comrades meeting with such a horrible fate was almost too much for him.

Ralph's honest face assumed an expression of deep anxiety, for, fertile though his resources usually were, he could not at that moment conceive how it was possible for two unarmed men, either by force or stratagem, to rescue five comrades who were securely bound, and guarded by forty armed warriors, all of whom were trained from infancy in the midst of alarms that made caution and intense watchfulness second nature to them.

"It looks bad," said Ralph, sitting down on a stone, clasping his hard hands together, and resting an elbow on each knee. "Sit ye down, Pierre. We'll think a bit, an' then go to work. That's wot we'll do—d'ye see?"

"Non, I don't see," groaned Pierre. "Vat can ve do? Two to forty! If it was only swords ve had to fight vid—Hah! But alas; we have noting—dey have every ting."

"True, lad, force won't do," returned Ralph; "an' yit," he added, knitting his brows, "if nothin' else 'll do, we'll try at least *how much* force 'll do."

After a short pause, Ralph resumed,—"Wos they tied very tight, Pierre?"

"Oui. I see de cords deep in de wrists, an' poor Blue Cap seem to be ver' moch stunned; he valk as if hims be dronk."

"Drunk!" exclaimed Ralph, suddenly springing up as if he had received an electric shock, and seizing his companion by both shoulders, while for a moment, he gazed eagerly into his eyes; then rushing him violently away, he turned round and darted along the bank of the river, crying, as he went, "Come along, Pierre, I'll tell ye wot's up as we go!"

The astonished Canadian followed as fast as he could, and in an exclamatory interjectional sort of way, his friend explained the plan of rescue which he had suddenly conceived, and which was as follows:—

First he proposed to go back to the *cache* at the foot of the tall tree, and dig up the keg of brandy, with which he resolved to proceed to the camp of the Indians, and by some means or other, get the whole clan to drink until they should become intoxicated. Once in this condition, he felt assured they could be easily circumvented. Pierre grasped at this wild plan as a drowning man is said to grasp at a straw, and lent his aid right willingly to disentomb and carry the brandy-keg. Neither he nor Ralph knew whether there was enough brandy to intoxicate the whole tribe, but they had no time to inquire minutely into probabilities.

Vigorously, perseveringly, without rest or halt, did these two trappers pursue their way that night, with the keg slung on a pole between them. The stars glimmered down through the trees upon their path, as if they wished them success in their enterprise. It was all-important that they should reach the Indian camp before day-break so, although footsore and weary from their late exertion after a long day's march, they nevertheless ran steadily on at a long swinging trot, which brought them, to their inexpressible joy, much sooner than they had anticipated, to their journey's end.

It was two hours before dawn when they came suddenly upon the camp,—So suddenly that they had to crouch the instant they saw the watch-fires, in order to avoid being discovered.

"Now, Pierre," whispered Ralph, "you'll have to remain here. Get into a hiding-place as fast as you can, and keep close. You're clever enough to know what to do, and when to do it. Only, lad, come near and have your knife handy when the row is at the loudest, and see that ye don't let the squaws cut out our livers when we're tied up."

Pierre nodded significantly.

"It's a curious fact," continued Ralph, in a somewhat sad tone, "that I'm more afraid o' the squaws than o' the men. Hows'ever, it's got to be done!"

So saying, Ralph shouldered the keg, and, shaking his comrade by the hand, as if he felt that he might be parting with him forever, he glided into the darkness of the forest, leaving Pierre to secrete himself on the side of a mound from which he could witness all that went on in the camp.

From this point of observation the poor Canadian beheld what was not calculated to allay his fears. The camp lay in a hollow, surrounded by trees. On an open space was erected several leathern huts or tents, in the midst of which blazed a large camp fire. Round this the forty warriors were seated, eating their supper, while a number of squaws were sitting in the the entrances to their tents variously engaged. Horses hobbled—that is, with the fore-feet tied together to prevent their running away—were cropping the grass close to the tents. Not far from them, and within the circle of light cast around by the fire, stood a group of small trees. To each of these was tied a man, and Pierre had no difficulty in making them out to be his unfortunate comrades.

Occasionlly, as he gazed, one or two of the old Indian women went up to these helpless men, with a yell of execration, and brandishing scalping-knives before their faces, appeared as if about to plunge them into their hearts; but their time had not yet come; the hags were only anticipating the feast of butchery that awaited them on the morrow."

While Pierre was gazing at this scene with mingled feelings of anxiety, rage and horror, the whole band of Indians suddenly sprang to their feet and seized their weapons.

Almost at the same moment Ralph strode into the circle of light and deposited his cask on the ground. Then, making signs of peace, he advanced toward one of the Indians, who, from his dress and appearance, seemed to be the chief, and presented him with a piece of tobacco. The chief accepted the gift in silence.

Ralph who was well acquainted with many of the dialects of that region, had no difficulty in making himself understood. He stated that he was a trapper, that he had come to that country to trade, and asked whether his Indian friends had furs to dispose of. As he had anticipated, the savages were in no mood to treat with a solitary man who was entirely in their power. The chief, who evidently suspected that he was a friend of the prisoners, instead of replying, asked him sarcastically what he had in the keg.

"Fire-water," replied Ralph, unhesitatingly.

At this the eyes of the savages sparkled with delight. Not deigning to waste more time with him, they seized the unfortunate trapper, and confronted him with his companions, gazing earnestly in their faces the while to observe whether they betrayed any sign of recognition.

It said much for the self-control of these hardy men, that, although their comrade was thus suddenly and unexpectedly placed before them, they did not permit a muscle of their countenances to change, but gazed on him and on his captors with that expression of defiant contempt with which Indians usually meet their fate, and in which they are equalled, sometimes even outdone, by the unfortunate white trappers who chance to fall into their cruel hands.

The Indians, therefore, passed away from them with a howl of derision, and tied Ralph to a tree beside his comrades, concluding that, instead of a plotter, they had, in him, made another lucky capture. Anxiety to taste their beloved beverage had something to do with their haste in this matter, no doubt.

No one who has not seen it can conceive of the intense passion the North American Indian has for ardent spirits. He seems to have no power of restraint whatever when the opportunity of indulging that passion presents itself.

The head of the keg was quickly knocked in, and the eyes of the savages seemed positively to flash as they gazed upon the precious fluid. The chief advanced first with a little tin mug, such as was sold to them by traders

and drank a deep draught; he then handed the cup to another, but the impatience of the others could not be restrained; they crowded round with their mugs, and dipping them into the keg, drank eagerly, while the squaws who loved the fire-water as much as did their masters, formed an outer circle, and as patiently as they could, awaited their turn. They knew full well that it would soon come.

The Indians, being unaccustomed to frequent potations, were quickly maddened by the spirit, which mounted to their brains and rushed through their veins like wild-fire, causing every nerve in their strong frames to tingle. Their characteristic gravity and decorum vanished. They laughed, they danced, they sang, they yelled, like a troop of incarnate fiends! Then they rushed in a body toward their prisoners, and began a species of war-dance round them, flourishing their tomahawks and knives close to their faces as if they were about to slay them; shrieking and howling in the most unearthly manner, and using all those cruel devices that are practiced by Red Indians to terrify those unfortunates whom they intend ultimately to kill.

Suddenly one of the warriors observed that the squaws were stealthily approaching the spirit-keg, and rushed toward them with a howl of fury, followed by his comrades, who drove the women away and recommenced drinking. And now a fiercer spirit seemed to seize upon the savages; old feuds and jealousies that had long been cherished in silence, broke irresistibly forth. Angry words and fierce looks were followed by the drawing of knives. Suddenly a young man rushed upon a comrade and buried his knife in his heart. The piercing death-cry was followed by the vengeful yell of the relatives of the murdered man, as they sprang upon the murderer. Others flew to the rescue, and the drunken *melee* became general. Blood began to flow freely, and there is no doubt that many lives would have been sacrificed had not the combatants been too much intoxicated to fight with vigor. Many of them fell prostrate and helpless on attempting to rise. Others dealt their blows at random, staggering and falling one upon another, until they lay in a heap, shrieking, biting, tearing, and stabbing—a bloody struggling mass.

And now Pierre Cassecon felt that it was time for him to draw near to the horrible scene, in order to be ready, when the moment should arrive to release the prisoners, or to protect them in the event of any of the drunken crew being tempted to a premature slaughter.

The women were now actively interfering to prevent further bloodshed. Most of the Indians were already dead drunk. Only a few whose powers of endurance were greater than those of their comrades, continued to shout their war-songs. When these were down, the women rushed at the spirits like wolves. Even the little children came out from the tents and got their share. It was a terrible scene, such as has, alas! been often enacted before in the wilds of the far West.

In a very short space of time the women were as helpless as their masters. Then Pierre cut the thongs that bound his comrades, and set them free!

"Thanks, thanks to the Almighty," said Arthur Lispenard, earnestly, when his bonds were cut. "I had thought that my days were numbered; that it was to be my sad fate to fill a grave here in the wilderness. But His hand is indeed mighty to save. And thanks be to you, good Pierre. Under God we owe our lives to you."

Arthur attempted to seize Pierre's hand as he spoke, but his own hands refused obedience to his will. They had been so long and so tightly bound that they were utterly powerless.

"Rub 'em, rub 'em well," said Pierre, seizing the artist's hands and enforcing his own recommendation vigorously.

"Ay, that's it," said Blue Cap, who, with his companions, had, the instant he was loose, commenced to rub and chafe his own benumbed limbs into vitality, as if his life and theirs depended on their exertions—as indeed they did to no small extent, for, had they been called upon to fight or fly at that moment, they could have done neither.

"Now, lads," said Ralph, who, having been a prisoner but a short time, was unhurt by his bonds, "while ye rub the life into yer limbs I'll tell ye wot we must do. Them scamps (pointing to the prostrate Indians) won't lie there long. Of course, bein' white men an' Christians, we don't mean to kill them or to lift their scalps—"

"I've know'd white men," interrupted Blue Cap, "who called themselves christians, and didn't object to take scalps when they got the chance."

"So have I," returned Ralph, "an' more's the pity. It's sitch-like blackguards as these that keeps honest trappers and fur-traders for iver in hot water here. Howsomediver, we're not agoin' to turn *our*selves into brute beasts 'cause they're turned *their*selves into sich."

"I'm not so sure o' that,"," broke in Black Butcher casting a scowling glance on the savages as he surveyed a wound in his left arm, which, although not serious, from want of dressing, sufficiently painful, "I calc'late it would serve them reptiles right if we was to wangskiver the whole on 'em as they lie."

"I don't b'lieve," retorted Ralph, "that '*whanskiver*' is either English, Injun, French, or Yankee; but if it means *killin'* you'll do nothing o' the sort. Here's what we'll do. We'll ketch as many horses as wos took from Mr. Lispenard's fellers, an' as many guns too (the same ones if we can lay hands on 'em), an' as much powder an' shot an' other things as that keg o' brandy is worth, an' then we'll bid the red-skins good-by without wakenin' of 'em up."

"Goot," ejaculated Pierre, pausing in his manipulation of the artist, "now you can do!"

"Capital; thanks, I feel quite strong again."

"I say, Pierre," observed Foxtail Ben, ruefully, "they've almost sawed through the skin o' my ankle. I've no left foot at all, as far as feelin' goes."

"Ah! me boy, 'tis well you have foot left, though you not feel left foot! Let me see."

"That's it, Pierre, rub away; if your jokes were as good as your surgery you'd be too good, a long way for the backwoods."

By dint of chaffing and rubbing and leaping and stamping, the whole party were soon restored to a serviceable condition, after which they set about active preparations for departure.

First they ransacked the tents, where they discovered all the guns that had been taken from the party. These they tied up in a bundle, after each had secured one for his own use. Among them the artist found, to his intense delight, his own double-barrelled gun, the loss of which he had mourned most sincerely.

Next, they secured the horses, which, being hobbled, as we have said elsewhere, were easily caught. Then the powder-horns, and shot-belts were found, and being full of ammunition, were slung across their shoulders forthwith. Among other things belonging to the party were discovered a number of blankets, some tea and sugar, and a variety of other useful articles, besides several packs of furs; all of which were made up into portable bundles that could be easily carried at their saddle-bows. The supply of every thing was so ample that it was not necessary to touch a single article belonging to the Indians.

This was a matter of much satisfaction to Blue Cap, who wished to show these unfortunate children of the wilderness that there were at least some white trappers who were actuated by different and kindlier feelings than many who sought their livelihood in those regions.

"Hullo! wot have we here?" cried Black Butcher, who was poking inquisitively about among the tents, to the consternation of the poor Indian children, who lay huddled up in their rabbit-skin blankets, trembling from head to foot, and expecting to be scalped forthwith,—such of them, at least, as were old enough to expect anything. "Here's your blunderbusses, I guess, mister."

"What! my pistols," cried Arthur, seizing his weapons

with as much delight as if they had been really serviceable.

"Hah! ver' goot for play vid," observed Pierre, contemptuously.

"I say, here's something else," said Ralph, picking up a rifle.

"Wah!" exclaimed Wyachunk, pointing to the weapon in surprise, and turning his eyes on Blue Cap.

"Wot! d'ye know who it belonged to?" inquired Ralph.

An expression of deep sorrow overspread Blue Cap's countenance. "Ay," said he, mournfully, I know it well. It belonged to young Carter." Glancing quickly up at a place were several scalps were hanging to a pole, he took one down, and after gazing at it sadly for a few seconds, he added, in a tone of deep melancholy—"Poor, poor Carter! ye had a hearty spirit an' a kindly heart. Your huntin' days are soon over!"

"Was he a friend of yours?" inquired Lispenard, affected by the old trapper's look and tone.

"Ay, ay, he was, he was," said Blue Cap, quickly, and with a sternness of manner that surprised his companions; "come, lads, mount! mount! The redskins won't part with plunder without making an effort to get it back."

"But, stop a bit, Blue Cap," cried Ralph, detaining the old man, "ye did'nt use for to be so hot an' hasty. Where are we to go to? That's wot I want to know."

"True," observed Blue Cap, in his old gentle tones, "we've more horses than we need, and some furs to dispose of. There's a tradin' fort in the mountains, but it's a good bit from this."

"What o' that?" said Foxtail Ben, somewhat impetuously, "are we not armed and well mounted, and strong, and have we not lots o' time before us?"

"Well said," cried Ralph.

"Ditto," echoed Black Butcher.

"Then we'll do it!" cried Blue Cap, vaulting into the saddle with a spring that a young man might have envied.

The others followed his example, and in a few seconds they were picking their way carefully down the ravine in which the Indian camp was situated. Leaving this quickly behind, they trotted briskly along the more open banks of the river until they gained a level sweep of land which terminated in a belt of low bushes. Beyond this lay the great plains. Breaking into a gallop, they speedily cleared the underwood, and just as the rosy smile of morning beamed in the eastern sky, they dashed away, with light hearts and loose reins, out upon the springy turf of the open prairie.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRAIRIE.

A HORSE is a wonderful thing—if we may presume to style so noble a creature "a thing!" And the associations connected in some minds with a horse are wonderful associations.

After a few weeks' aquaintance, the trapper and his horse become one—part and parcel of each other, at least so far as it is possible for man and horse to amalgamate.

Night after night, the horses—having stuffed themselves like greedy things as they were, with the greenest and tenderest herbage on the rich plains—returned to the camp fire round which the trappers were lying in deep slumber, and each selecting his own master, would stand over him with drooping head and go to sleep, until dawn called them again to united action.

Thus day and night passed for the space of three weeks after the night of the surprise of the Indian camp, without anything particular occuring; and thus quadrupeds and bipeds came to be so familiar and well acquainted with each other—so thoroughly united in sympathetic action—as almost to become hexapeds, if we may be permitted the expression.

Foxtail Ben's quadruped was a beautiful little bay, whose tendency to bound over every little stick and stone, as if it were a five-barred gate, and to run away upon any and every occasion, admirably suited the tastes and inclinations of its mercurial rider.

There was one among the quadrupeds which was striking in appearance—not to say stunning.

Although we won't say that the quadruped in question was stunning, we will say again that it was striking—so powerfully striking that the force of the stroke was calculated almost to stun. It was uncommonly tall, remarkably short in the body, and had a piebald coat. Moreover, it had no tail—to speak of—as that member had, in some unguarded moment, got into the blaze of the camp fire and been burnt off close to the stump. The stump, however, was pretty long, and, at the time when the trappers became possessed of the animal, that appendage was covered with a new growth of sparsely scattered and very stiff hair, about three inches long, so that it resembled a gigantic bottle-brush. Being a spirited animal, the horse had a lively bottle-brush, which was grotesque, if it was anything else.

This quadruped's own particular biped was Arthur Lispenard. He had a peculiar liking for it (as he had for everything picturesque), not only on account of its good qualities—which were an easy gait and a tender mouth—but also because it was his own original animal, that of which he had been deprived by the Indians, and which he had recaptured with feelings akin to those of a mother who recovers a long-lost child.

We have said that the space of three weeks passed without anything particular occurring to our trappers. This remark, however, must be taken in a limited sense. Nothing particularly connected with the thread of this story occurred; though very many and particularly interesting things of a minor nature did occur during the course of that period.

"It's a strong place," said Blue Cap, checking the pace of his horse and pointing to a small edifice or fort which stood on the summit of a little mound or hill about a quarter of a mile in advance of them—"a very strong place—such as would puzzle the red-skins to break into if defended by men of ordinary pluck."

"Men of pluck sometimes get careless, and go to sleep, though," said Foxtail Ben, riding up to the old trapper; "I've heard o' such forts bein' taken by red-skins before now."

"So have I, lad, so have I," returned Blue Cap; "I've heard o' a fort bein' attacked by Injuns when the men were away huntin' an' bein' burnt down. But it generally turns out that the whites have had themselves to thank for't."

"Ay, that's true," observed Ralph the Roarer; "some o' the whites in them parts is no better nor they should be. They treats the poor Injuns as if they wos dogs or varmints, an' then they're astonished if the red-skins murder them out o' revenge. I know'd one feller as told me that when he lived on the west side o' the mountains, where some of the Injuns are a murderin' set o' thieves, he niver lost a chance o' killin' a red-skin. Of course the red-skins niver lost a chance o' killin' the whites; an' so they come to sich a state o' war, that they had to make peace by givin' them no end o' presents o' guns an cloth an' beads—enough to buy up the furs o' a whole tribe."

"I guess they was powerful green to do anything o' the sort," said Black Butcher; "I know'd a feller as was in command of a party o' whites, who got into much the same sort of fix with the Injuns—always fightin' and murderin'; so what does he do, think ye?"

"Shooted de chief and all hims peepil," suggested Cassecon.

"Nothin' o' the sort," replied Black Butcher. "He sends for the chief, an' gives him a grand present, an' says he wants to marry his darter. An' so he *did* marry his darter, right off, an' the whites an' redskins was friends ever after that. The man what did that was a gentleman

too—so they said; tho' for my part I don't know what a gentleman is—no more do I b'lieve there ain't sich a thing; but if there be an' it means anything good, I calc'late that that man was a gentleman, for w'en he grew old he took his old squaw to Canada with him, 'spite the larfin' o' his comrades, who said he'd have to set up a wigwam for her in his garden. But he says, 'No,' says he, 'I married the old ooman for better an' for worse, an' I'll stick by her to the last. There's too many o' you chaps as leaves yer wives behind ye when ye go home—I'm determined to set ye a better example.' An' so he did. He tuk her home an' put her in a grand house in some town in Canada—I don't well mind which,—but when he was'nt watchin' of her, the old ooman would squat down on the carpet in the drawin'-room, for d'ye see, she did'nt been used to chairs. His frinds used to advise him to put her away, an' the kindlier sort said he should give her a room to herself, and not bring her into company where she warn't at ease; but no, the old man said always, 'She's my lawful wedded wife, an' if she was a buffalo cow I'd stick by her to the last'—an' so he did."

"Vraiment he was voncur'ous creetur," observed Pierre.

"See, they have descried us!" exclaimed Arthur, pointing to the fort, which they were now approaching, and where a bustle among the inhabitants showed that their visitors were not always peacefully disposed, and that it behoved them to regard strangers with suspicion.

"Would it not be well to send one of our party on in advance with a white flag?" observed Arthur.

"No need for that," replied Blue Cap, "they're used to all kinds o' visitors—friends as well as foes. I fear, however, from the haste they show in closing their gate that they aint on good terms with the Injuns."

The redmen and the pale-faces are at war," said Wyachunk.

"Ay, you're used to the signs, no doubt," returned Blue Cap, "for you've lived here once upon a time, I b'lieve."

The Indian made no reply, but a dark frown overspread his countenance for a few minutes. When it passed, his features settled down into their usual state of quiet gravity.

"Have ye ever seed that fort before?" inquired Ralph, in the Indian tongue.

"I have," answered Wyachunk. "Many moons have passed since I was in this spot. My nation was strong then. It is weak now. Few braves are left. We sometimes carried our furs to that fort to trade with the pale-faces. It is called the Mountain Fort. The chief of the pale-faces was a bad man then. He loved fire-water too much. If he is there still, I do not wonder that there is war between him and the redmen."

"That's bad," said Ralph, shaking his head slowly—"very bad; for the red-skins 'll kill us if they can, on account o' them rascally fur-traders. Hows'ever we can't mend it, so we must bear it."

As Ralph uttered this consolitary remark, the party cantered up to the open space in front of the gate of the fort, just above which a man was seen quietly leaning over the wooden walls of the place with a gun resting on his arm.

"Hallo!" shouted this individual, when they came within hail.

"Hallo!" responded Ralph.

"Friends or foes, and where from?" inquired the laconic guardian of the fort.

"Friends," replied Blue Cap, riding forward, "we come from the Yellowstone. Have lost some of our property, but got some of it back and want to trade furs with you."

To this the sentinel made no reply, but, looking straight at Black Butcher, inquired abruptly,—

"Are you Snake-Eye Sol?"

"Who's that?" said Black Butcher, gruffly.

"Why, the Comanche-hater."

"No, I hain't," said the other, still more gruffly, for he did not feel flattered by the question.

"Have you seen him?"

"No, I hain't, an' guess I shouldn't know him if I had."

"Why do you ask?" inquired Foxcait Ben; his curiosity had been roused by these unexpected questions.

"Cause I want to know," replied the man, quitting his post and disappearing. In a few minutes he opened the gate, and the trappers trotted into the square of the fort.

The Mountain Fort, in which they now dismounted, was one of those little wooden erections in which the hardy pioneers of the fur-trade were wont in days of old to establish themselves, in the very heart of the Indian country. Such forts may still be seen in precisely similar circumstances, and built in the same manner, at the present day, in the Hudson's Bay territories; with this difference that the Indians, having had long experience of the good intentions and the kindness of the pale-faces, no longer regard them with suspicion.

The walls were made of strong tall palisades, with bastions built of logs at the corners, and a gallery running all round inside close to the top of the walls, so that the defenders of the place could fire over the palisades, if need be at their assailants. There was a small iron cannon in each bastion. One large gate formed the entrance, but this was only opened to admit horsemen or carts; a small wicket in one leaf of the gate formed the usual entrance.

The buildings within the fort consisted of three little houses, one being a store, the others dwelling-houses, about which several men and women and Indian children, besides a number of dogs, were grouped. These immediately surrounded the trappers as the dismounted. "Who commands here?" inquired Blue Cap.

"I do," said the sentinel before referred to, pushing aside the others and stepping forward, "at least I do at present. My name's Hiller. He who ought to command is drunk. He's *always* drunk."

There was a savage gruffness in the way in which Hiller said this that surprised the visitors, for his sturdy-looking and honest countenance seemed to accord ill with such tones.

"An' may I ask who *he* is?" said Blue Cap.

"Oh, yes; his name's Parkhurst—you can't see him to-night, though. There 'll be bloody work here before long if he don't turn over a new leaf—

Hiller checked himself as if he felt that he had gone too far. Then he added in a tone that seemed much more natural to him—"Now, sirs, come this way. Here" (turning to the men who stood by), "look to these horses and see them fed. Come into the hall, friends, an' the squaws will prepare something for you to eat while we have a smoke and a talk together."

So saying, this changeable man, who was a strange compound of a trapper and a gentleman, led the way to the principal dwelling-house, and, throwing open the door, ushered his guests into the reception hall of the Mountain Fort.

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE SCENE.

The reception-hall of the Mountain Fort, into which, as we have stated, the trappers were ushered by Hiller, was one of those curious apartments which were in those days (and in a few cases still are) created for the express purpose of "astonishing the natives!"

It was a square room, occupying the centre of the house, and having doors all round, which opened into the sleeping or other departments of the dwelling. In the front wall of this room were the door, which led direct into the open air, and the two windows. There were no passages in the house—it was all rooms and doors. One of these doors, toward the back, opened into a species of scullery—but it was not exactly a scullery, neither was it a kitchen, neither was it a pantry. The squaws lived there—especially the cooking-squaws—and a few favored dogs. A large number of pots and pans and kettles, besides a good deal

of lumber and provisions in daily use, also dwelt there. A door led from this room out to the back of the house, and into a small off-shoot, which was the kitchen proper. Here a spirited French Canadian reigned supreme in the midst of food, fire, and steam, smoke, smells, and fat.

But, to return to the reception-hall. There were no pictures on its walls, no draperies about its windows, no carpets on its floors, no cloths on its tables, and no ornaments on its mantel-shelf. Indeed, there was no mantel-shelf to put ornaments upon. The floor, the walls, the ceiling, the chairs, the tables, all were composed of the same material —wood. The splendor of the apartment was entirely due to paint. Every thing was painted—and that with a view solely to startling effect. Blue, red, and yellow, in their most brilliant purity, were laid on in a variety of original devices, and with a boldness of contrast that threw Moorish effort in that line quite into the shade. The Alhambra was nothing to it! The floor was yellow ochre; the ceiling was sky-blue; the cornices were scarlet, with flutings of blue and yellow, and, underneath, a broad belt of fruit and foliage, executed in an extremely arabesque style. The walls were light green, with narrow bands of red down the sides of each plank. The table was yellow, the chairs blue, and their bottoms red, by way of harmonious variety. But the grand point—the great masterpiece in the ornamentation of this apartment—was the centre-piece in the ceiling, in the execution of which there was an extraordinary display of what can be accomplished by the daring flight of an original genius revelling in the conscious possession of illimitable power, without the paralyzing influence of conventional education.

The device itself was indescribable. It was a sun, or a star, or rather, a union and commingling of suns and stars in violent contrast, wreathed with fanciful fruits and foliage, and Cupids, and creatures of the now extinct species. The rainbow had been the painter's palette; Genius his brush; Fancy-gone-mad his attendant; the total temporary stagnation of redskin faculties his object, and ecstasy his general state of mind, when he executed this magnificent *chef d'œuvre* in the centre of the ceiling of the reception-hall at the Mountain Fort.

The fire-place was a capacious cavern in the wall opposite the entrance-door, in which, during winter, there usually burned a roaring bonfire of huge logs of wood but where, at the time of which we write, there was just enough fire to enable visitors to light their pipes. When that fire blazed up in the dark winter nights, the effect of that gorgeous apartment was dazzling—absolutely bewildering.

The effect upon our trappers when they entered was sufficiently strong. They gazed round in amazement, each giving vent to his feelings in his own peculiar exclamatory grunt, or gasp, or cough. In addition to this, Ralph smote his thigh with unwonted vigor. Pierre, after gazing for a few minutes, sighed out something that sounded like *magnifique!* and Arthur grinned from ear to ear;—he went further; he laughed aloud—an impolite thing to do in the circumstances, and for a grave man like him, an unusual ebullition of feeling. But it was observed and noted on this occasion the artist did not draw forth his sketch-book.

Hiller, who, from his speech and bearing, was evidently a man of some education, placed chairs for his visitors, took the lid off a large canister of tobacco, and pushing it into the middle of the yellow table, said—

"Sit ye down, friends, and help yourselves."

He set them the example by taking down his own pipe from a nail in the wall, and proceeding to fill it. Having done so, he took a piece of glowing charcoal from the fire and placing it on the bowl, began to smoke, glancing the while with an amused expression on his grave face, at the trappers, who, while filling their pipes, kept gazing round the walls and up at the ceiling.

"Ha!" said he, "you are struck with our hall (puff, puff). It's rather (puff) an effective one (puff). Have a light?"

Ralph, to whom the light was offered, accepted the same; applied it to his pipe, and said—

"Well, yes (puff, it is (puff, puff), raither wot ye may call (puff) pecooliar."

"Most visitors to this place think so," said Hiller. "The Indians highly approve of it, and deem me quite a marvel of artistic power."

"Wot! did *you* paint it?" inquired Black Butcher.

"I did," answered Hiller, with a nod.

"Vraiment, de Injuns am right in deir opinion of you," cried Pierre, relighting his pipe, which, in the astonished state of his mind, he had allowed to go out.

Hiller smiled, if we may so speak, *gravely*, in acknowledgment of the compliment.

"Ha!" cried Pierre, turning to Arthur, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him, "Monsieur Lispenard et Monsieur Heeleer, you be broders. Oui, Monsieur Heeleer dis mine comrade—him be von painteur."

"Indeed?" said Heeleer, turning to the artist with more interest than he had yet shown toward the strangers.

"I have, indeed, the honor to follow the noble profession of painting," said Arthur, "but I cannot boast of having soared so high as—as—"

"As to attempt the frescoes on the ceiling of a reception-hall in the backwoods," interrupted Hiller, laughing. "No, I believe you, sir; but, although I cannot presume to call you brother professionally, still I trust that I may do so as an amateur. I am delighted to see you here. It is not often we are refreshed with the sight of the face of a civilized man in these wild regions."

"Upon my word, sir, you are plain-spoken," said Foxtail Ben, with a look of affected indignation; "what do you call *us?*"

"Pardon me, young sir," replied Hiller. "I call you trappers, which means neither civilized or savage; neither fish, nor flesh, nor fowl—"

"That's a foul calumny," cried Ralph, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and refilling it from the canister; "it's wot may be called a—a—"

"Lie," suggested Black Butcher.

"No," said Ralph, "it ain't that. I don't like that word. It's a ugly word, an' you shouldn't ought to use it, Black Butcher. It's a *error;* it's wot it is, in a feelosophical pint o' view. Jest as much of a error, now, as it was in you, Mister Hiller, p'tting so little baccy in this here thing that there ain't none left."

"What! is it all done?" cried Hiller, rising, and seizing the canister; "so it is. I declare you smoke almost as fast as Snake-Eye Sol himself; for whom I mistook you, Mr. Black Butcher, when I saw you first, at some distance off."

Saying this, he left the room to fetch a further supply of the soothing weed, and at the same moment two squaws appeared, bearing smoking dishes of white-fish and venison.

"That fellow knows something about Snake-Eye Sol," said Foxtail Ben, in a low, eager tone, to his comrades. "Twice has he mentioned his name since we arrived."

"So he has," observed Blue Cap, "but there may be other wild men besides our one."

"Unpossible," said Ralph the Roarer emphatically.

"Ditto," cried Black Butcher, still more emphatically, "what say you, Black Butcher?"

"There is but one Snake-eye Sol," replied the Indian.

"By the way Wyachunk, what was the name o' the rascally trader that was in charge o' this fort when you lived here?" asked Blue Cap.

"Parkhurster," replied the Indian.

"Ha, Parkhurst, yo mean, no doubt."

Wyachunk nodded.

"Here you are, friends," said Hiller, reentering the room with a large roll of tobacco. "Help yourselves and don't spare it. There's plenty more where that came from. But I see the steaks are ready, so let us fall to, we can smoke afterwards."

During the repast, to which the trappers applied themselves with the gusto of hungry men, Foxtail Ben questioned Hiller about Sol.

"Snake-Eye Sol," said he in some surprise; "is it possible there are trappers in the Rocky Mountains who have not heard of *him*?"

"Oh yes," said March hastily, "we've heard of him, but we want to hear more particularly about him, for the accounts don't all agree."

"Ha! that's it," said Ralph, speaking with difficulty through a large mouthful of fish, "that's it. They don't agree. One says his rifle is thirty feet long, another forty feet, and so on. There's no getting at truth in this——"

A bone having stuck in Ralph's throat at that moment he was unable to conclude his sentence.

"As to the length of his rifle," said Hiller, when the noise made by Ralph in partially choking had subsided, "you seem to have got rather wild notions about Snake-Eye Sol too, I see."

"But he *is* a giant, isn't he?" inquired Ben anxiously.

"N—not exactly. Certainly he is a big fellow, about the biggest man I ever saw—but he's not forty feet high."

Foxtail Ben's romantic hopes began to sink. "Then he's an ordinary man just like one o' us," he said, almost gloomily.

"Nay, that he is not," returned Hiller, laughing. "Your comrade, Black Butcher, does indeed approach to him somewhat in height, but he's nothing to him in breadth; and as for ferocity, strength and activity, I never saw any thing like him in my life. He comes sometimes here to exchange his furs for powder and lead, but he'll speak to no one except in the sharpest, gruffest way. I think he's mad myself. But he seems to lead a charmed life here; for although he has had fights with many of the tribes in these parts, he always puts them to flight although he fights single-handed."

"Single-handed!" exclaimed Ralph the Roarer.

"Ay. I've seen him at it myself, and can vouch for it, that if ever there was a born fiend let loose on this earth it's Snake-Eye Sol, when he sets-to to thrash a dozen Indians. But I must do him the justice to say, that I never heard of him making an unprovoked attack on anybody. When he first came to these mountains, many years ago—before I came here—the Indians used to wonder who he was and what he meant to do; then after a while, seeing he had a good horse, a good rifle, and plenty of ammunition, they tried to kill him; but the first fellow that tried that only tried it once. He lay in a close thicket nigh to where Sol used to pass from his home in the mountains to places where he used to hunt the elk and the buffalo, so, when he came up, the Indian laid an arrow on his bow. But Sol's eye was sharp as a needle. He stopped his horse, took aim like a flash of lightning, and shot him through the head. I heard this from another Indian that was with the murderin' fellow that was shot. Sol did nothing to the other. He let him escape.

"Of course the relations of the man who was killed were up immediately, and twenty of them set out to murder Snake-Eye. They took their horses, spears, and bows with them, and lay in wait at a place where he was often seen passing. Sure enough, up he came, on horse-back, at a slow walk, looking as careless and easy as if no blood of a red-skin rested on his hand.

"It chanced the day before that day that we had run out of fresh meat, so Mr. Parkhurst, our commandant here, ordered me to take three of the men, and go out after the buffaloes. Away we went, looking sharp out, however, for some of the Indians had been treated by Parkhurst so brutally, I am sorry to say, that we knew our scalps were not safe. Next morning I happened to pass close by the place where the Indians lay in ambush, and we came to the top of a precipice that overlooked the spot. We saw them before they saw us, so we went quietly back into the bush, tied our horses to trees, and lay on the edge of the cliff to watch them.

"In about ten minutes after we saw Snake-Eye riding slowly forward. He was a strange sight. It was the first time I had seen him, although I had often heard of him before.

"Well, on he came, with his head bent and his eyes fixed on the ground.

A dense thicket hid his enemies from him, though not from us, we being so high above them. Sol was armed with his long rifle slung at his back, a hunting knife and a small shield, such as the Blackfoot Indians use to protect them from arrows. The only unusual sort of weapon he carried was a long sword.

"Not knowing at the time that the Indians were waiting for him, of course I gave no alarm to warn him of his danger. When he came within a hundred yards of the thicket, I saw him push his arm a little further into the handles of his shield. It was but a slight action, such as one might perform to ease the arm by change of position; but the red-skins are quick-witted. They knew that he suspected they were there, so, giving one tremendous yell they sent a cloud of arrows at him, and sprang out upon the plain at full gallop with their spears lowered.

Instead of turning to fly from such an unequal combat, Sol drew his sword and rushed at them like a thunderbolt. His onset was the most awful thing I ever saw in my life. The plain seemed to shake under the tread of his gigantic horse. His hair streamed wildly out behind him, and as he was coming toward me I could see that his teeth were set, and his eyes flashed like those of a tiger. The Indians were appalled by the sight. The idea of one man attacking twenty had never occurred to them. They drew up; but it was too late to prevent a shock. There was a yell from the savages, a shout like the roar of a lion from Sol, and two horses and their riders lay on the plain. I saw the long sword gleam for a moment, just as the shock took place, and the head of a savage rolled immediately along the ground.

"The Indians, though overawed, were brave men. They turned to pursue the flying horseman, but they needed not. Sol was not flying, he was only unable at first to check the headlong pace of his charger. In a few seconds he wheeled about and charged. The Indians, however, did not await the issue; they turned and fled, and they have ever since remained in the firm belief that Sol is a "great medicine" man, and that no one can kill him. They say that neither arrows nor bullets can pierce his skin, which is an inch thick; that fire and smoke issue out of his mouth and eyes, and that his horse is, like himself, invulnerable. I must confess, however, that, with the exception of his enormous size and his ferocity, he is, from what I saw of him, much the same as other men."

Hiller concluded his description of this singular being, to which his guests listened open-eyed and mouthed, and helped himself to a buffalo-steak.

"An' what did he when the Indians ran away?" inquired Foxtail Ben.

"Oh! he quietly pulled up his horse and let them run. After they were gone, he continued his journey, as slow and cool as if nothing had happened. Few Indians attack him now, except new bands from distant parts of the country, who don't know him; but all who meddle with him find, to their cost, that it would have been better had they let him alone."

"Is he cruel? Does he eat men and childers?" inquired Ralph, commencing a fourth steak with a degree of violent energy that suggested the possibility of his being himself able to do some execution in the cannibal line, if necessary.

Hiller laughed. "Oh, dear no; he's not cruel. Neither does he eat human flesh. In fact, he has been known to do some kind acts to poor starving Indians when they least expected it. The real truth is, that he is only fierce when he's meddled with. He never takes revenge, and he has never been known to lift a scalp."

"But what like is he when he comes to trade his furs at the fort here? how does he speak, and in what language?" inquired Ben, although delighted with the account given

of the strength and valor of Snake-Eye Sol was by no means pleased to learn that he was not an absolute giant, something like the giant Despair of whom he had read in the "Pilgrim's Progress."

"He's just like a trapper—only he's a tremendous big one—six feet six, if he's an inch, and would make two of the biggest of the present company round the shoulders. But he's very silent, and won't let anyone question him. The long and short of it is, that I believe he is a madman—luckily he's a well-disposed madman, and I can vouch for it he's a crack hunter, though he don't bring many furs to trade. I think he spends most of his idle time in moping among the caves of the mountains."

"Does anyone know where he lives?" asked Arthur, who was gradually becoming interested in this strange being.

"No. We have sometimes tried to track him, but at a certain place we have invariably lost all traces of him."

"But what is his face like, and how does he dress?" inquired Foxtail Ben, eagerly; "you have not yet said anything about that."

Hiller was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a loud shouting in the yard of the fort. Leaping from their seats, the whole party ran to the windows.

"I thought so," cried Hiller, seizing his cap and hurrying out. "These are six of my men who have been out after the buffalo, and I see they have been successful."

The fort-gate had been swung open, and just as the guests issued from the reception-hall, six hunters galloped into the square with all the reckless noise and dash peculiar to that class of men.

Leaping from their foaming steeds, they were quickly surrounded by their comrades, and by the women and children of the place, who congratulated them on their success in the chase, and plied them with eager questions.

That they had indeed been successful, was evident from the masses of fresh meat with which the horses were laden.

"Well done, Foss," said Hiller, stepping up to one of the men, who, from his age and intelligence, had been put in command of the hunting party. "You are back sooner than I anticipated. Surely, your good genius sent the buffalo across your path."

"We have bin in luck, sir," replied the hunter, touching his cap. "We've killed more than we could carry, an' what's worse, we've killed more than we wanted."

"How so?"

"We've had a brush wi' the red-skins, sir, an' we had to kill one or two in self-defence."

Hiller's brow darkened. He clenched his teeth, and the large veins swelled in his neck and forehead. With a powerful effort he repressed his anger, and said,—

"Did I not warn you to avoid that if you could?"

"True, sir," replied Foss, humbly; "but we could not help it; for in the first heat of passion, one o' them was shot, an' after that, of course, we had to fight to save our own scalps."

"Who fired that first shot?" inquired Hiller, sternly.

Foss made no reply, but all eyes were at once turned upon a tall slouching man, with a forbidding cast of countenance, who had hitherto kept in the background.

"So, so, Levins," said Hiller, stepping up to the man, "you've been at your bloody work again, you scoundrel. Hah! you not only bring the enmity of the whole Indian race down on your own worthless head, and on the heads of your innocent companions, but you have the effrontery to bring the evidence of your guilt into this fort along with you."

As Hiller spoke, he laid hold of a scalp which still dropped fresh blood as it hung at the hunter's saddle-bow.

"If I'm to answer to you for every scalp I choose to lift in self-defence, the sooner I quit you the better," answered Levins, sulkily.

"Was there any occasion to lift this scalp at all?" demanded Hiller, as he seized the man by the collar.

"Who talks of lifting scalps?" growled a loud deep-toned voice.

All eyes were instantly turned on the speaker, and the crowd fell back to permit Mr. Parkhurst, the person in command of the Mountain Fort, to approach the scene of action.

The man who now appeared on the scene was a sad and a terrible sight to behold. He was one of that wretched class of human beings who, having run a long course of unbridled wickedness, become total wrecks in body and mind long before the prime of manhood has been passed. Parkhurst had been a confirmed drunkard for many years. He had long lost all power of self-control, and had now reached that last fearful stage when occasional fits of *delirium tremens* rendered him more like a wild beast than a man. Being a large and powerful man and naturally passionate, he was at these times a terror to all who came near him. He had been many years in charge of the fur-trading establishment, and having on many occasions maltreated the Indians, he was hated by them most cordially.

One of his mad fits had been on him for some days before the arrival of Foxtail Ben and his friends. He had recovered sufficiently to be able to stagger out of his room just at the time the buffalo-hunters, as above described, entered the square of the fort. As he strode forward, with nothing on but his shirt and trousers, his eyes blood-shot, his hair matted and disheveled, and his countenance haggard in the extreme, he was the most pitiable, and, at the same time, most terrible specimen of human degradation that the mind of man could conceive of.

"What now; who has been lifting scalps?" he growled between his set teeth, striding up to Levins, and glaring in his face, with his blood-shot eyes, like a tiger.

Hiller held up the bloody scalp.

"Who did it?" roared Parkhurst.

"I did," said Levins, with an attempt at a defiant air.

The words had barely passed his lips when he received a blow between the eyes that felled him to the earth. He attempted to rise, but, with a yell that sounded more like the war-cry of a savage than the wrathful shout of a civilized man, Parkhurst knocked him down again, and, springing at his throat, began to strangle him.

Up to this point, Hiller refrained from interfering, for he was not sorry to see the murderer receive such severe punishment; but, having no desire to witness a second murder, he now seized his master, and with the assistance of two of the men, succeeded in tearing him off from Levins, and in conveying him, as respectfully as possible in the circumstances, to his private chamber.

CHAPTER VII.

MURDER—PURSUIT.

When Hiller returned to the square, he found that the trappers had adjourned with the men of the establishment to enjoy a social pipe, and that Lispenard was taking a solitary, meditative promenade in front of the gate of the fort.

"You seem in a pensive mood, Mr. Lispenard," said the fur-trader on coming up, "will you not try a pipe? Our tobacco is good; I can recommend it."

He offered a plug of tobacco to the artist as he spoke.

"Thank you, I do not smoke," said Arthur, declining the proffered luxury. "Tobacco may be good: yet, I think the man is wiser who does not create an unnatural taste, than he who does so for the purpose of gratifying it."

"Ah! you are a philosopher."

We cannot tell what conclusion these philosophers would have come to in regard to smoking, because, just then, two horsemen were seen approaching the fort at full speed.

Seeing that they were alone, Hiller took no precautions to guard against surprise. He knew well enough that Indians frequently approach in this manner, so waited in

front of the gate, smoking his pipe, until the savages were within a few yards of him. It seemed as if they proposed running him down, but just as they came to within a couple of bounds of him, they drew up so violently as to throw their foaming steeds on their haunches.

Leaping to the ground the Indians—who were a couple of strong, fine-looking savages, dressed in leathern costume with the usual ornaments of bead and quill work, tags, and scalp-locks—came forward and spoke a few words to Hiller in the Cree language, and immediately after delivering their horses to the care of one of the men of the establishment, accompanied him to the store.

In less than half an hour they returned to the gate, when the Indians remounted, and starting away at their favorite pace—full gallop—were soon out of sight.

"Them fellows seem to be in a hurry," remarked Ralph, as they disappeared.

"Ay, they're after mischief too," replied Hiller, in a sad tone of voice. "They are two Cree chiefs who have come here for a supply of ammunition to hunt the buffalo, but I know they mean to haunt different game, for I heard them talking to each other about a war party of Blood Indians being in this part of the country. Depend upon it scalps will be taken ere long. 'Tis a sad, sad state of things. Blood, blood, blood seems to be the universal cry here, and now that we've had so many quarrels with the redskins, I fear that the day is not far distant when blood will flow even in the Mountain Fort. I see no prospect for a better state of things, for sa age nature cannot be changed. It seems a hopeless case."

"There was a touch of pathos in the tone in which this was said that was very different from Hiller's usual bold and reckless manner It was evident that his natural disposition was kind, hearty, and peaceable; but that the constant fends in which he was involved, both in the fort and out of it, had soured his temper and rendered him well-nigh desperate.

"You are wrong, sir, in saying that their case is hopeless," said Arthur, earnestly. "There is a remedy."

Hilier was about to reply, when he was interrupted by the approach of Mr. Parkhurst, who had now recovered somewhat from the effects of his violent fit of passion. Having observed during the melee that strangers had arrived at his fort, he had washed and converted himself into a more presentable personage, and now came forward to the group of trappers, all of whom had assembled at the gate. Addressing them in a tone of affable hospitality, he said,—

"Good day, friends; I'm glad to see you at the Mountain Fort. That blackguard, Levins, somewhat ruffled my temper. He's been the cause of much mischief here, I assure you. Do you intend to trap in these parts?"

The latter part of this speech was addressed to Blue Cap, who replied,—

"We do mean to try our luck in these parts, but we han't yet made up our minds exactly where to go. Mayhap you'll give us the benefit of your advice."

While he was speaking the fur-trader glanced with an earnest yet half stupid stare at the faces of the trappers, as if he wished to impress their features on his memory.

"Advice," he replied; you're welcome to all the advice I've got to give ye; and it's this—go home; go to where you belong to, sell your traps and rifles and take to the plough, the hatchet, the forehammer—to anything you like, so long as it keeps you out of this ——" Parkhurst paused a moment as if he were about to utter an oath, then dropped his voice and said. "This wretched Indian country."

"I guess, then, that we won't take yer advice, old man," said Black Butcher, with a laugh.

"'Old man?'" echoed Parkhurst, with a start.

"Wall, if ye beant old, ye ain't exactly a chicken."

"You're a plain-spoken man," replied the trader, biting his lips. "I always was," retorted Black Butcher.

Parkhurst frowned for a moment, then he broke into a forced laugh and said,—

"Well, friends, you'll please yourselves, of course; most people do; and if you are so determined to stick to the wilderness, I would advise some of you to stop here. There's plenty of fun and fighting, if you're fond of that. What say you now, lads," turning to Foxtail Ben, "to remain with us here at the Mountain Fort? I've ta'en a sort of fancy to your face. We want young bloods here. I'll give you a good wage and plenty to do."

"Thanks; you are kind," replied Foxtail Ben, smiling, "but I love freedom too well to part with it yet awhile."

"Mais, Monsieur," cried Pierre, pushing forward, pulling off his cap, and making a low bow; "if you vants yonger blod, an' also ver' goot blood, here am von!"

The trader laughed, and was about to reply, when a sudden burst of laughter and the sound of noisy voices interrupted him. Presently two of the men belonging to the establishment cantered out of the square, followed by all the men, women, and children of the place, amounting probably to between twenty and thirty souls. "A race! a race!" shouted the foremost.

"Hallo! Grand Loup, what's to do?" inquired Hiller as the two horsemen came up.

"Please, monsieur, Horsefield have bet me von gun dat hims horse go more queek dan mine,—so me try."

"Yes, so we shall, I guess," added the man named Horsefield, whose speech told that he was a Yankee.

"Go it stranger; I calc'late you'll do him slick," cried Butcher, patronizingly, for his heart warmed towards his countryman.

"Ah! non. Go home; put your horse to bed," cried Pierre, glancing at the Yankee's steed in contempt. "Dis is de von as vill do it more slicker by far."

"Well, well; clear the course; we shall soon see," cried Hiller. "Now then—here's the word,—one, two,—away!"

At the last word the riders' whips cracked, and the horses sprang forward at a furious gallop. Both of them were good spirited animals, and during the first part of the race it could not be said that either had the advantage. They ran neck-and neck together.

The race-course at the Mountain Fort was a beautiful stretch of level turf which extended a considerable distance in front of the gates. It crossed a clear open country towards the forest, where it terminated, and, sweeping round in an abrupt curve, formed, as it were, a loop; so that competitors, after passing over the course swept round the loop, and reentering the original course again, came back toward the fort, where a long pole formed the winning-post.

Grand Loup and Horsefield kept together, as we have seen for a time after starting, but before they had cleared the first half of the course the former was considerably in advance of the latter, much to the delight of most of the excited spectators, with whom he was a favorite.

On gaining the loop above referred to, and making the graceful sweep around it, which brought the foremost rider into full side view, the distance between them became more apparent, and a cheer arose from the people at the fort-gate.

At that moment a puff of smoke issued from the bushes. Grand Loup tossed his arms in the air, uttered a sharp cry, and fell headlong to the ground. At the same instant a band of Indians sprang from the underwood, with an exulting yell. Horsefield succeeded in checking his horse before they caught his bridle, but an arrow had pierced his shoulder ere he had galloped out of reach of his enemies.

The instant Grand Loup fell, a savage leaped upon him, and plunged his knife into his heart. Then passing the weapon quickly round his head with his right hand, with the left he tore the scalp off, and, leaping up, shook the bloody trophy defiantly at the horrified spectators.

All this was accomplished so quickly that the horror-stricken people of the Mountain Fort had not time to move a finger to save their comrade. But as the savage raised the scalp of poor Grand Loup above his head, Blue

Cap's rifle flew to his shoulder, and in another moment the Indian fell to the earth beside his victim. Seeing this, the other Indians darted into the forest.

Then a fearful imprecation burst from the lips of Parkhurst, as with a face convulsed with passion he rushed into the fort, shouting—"To horse! to horse, men! and see that your horns and pouches are full of powder and ball!"

The commotion and hubbub that now took place baffles all description. The men shouted and raved as they ran hither and thither, arming themselves and saddling their horses; while the shrieks of poor Grand Loup's mingled with those of the other women and the cries of the terrified children.

"Half a dozen of you must keep the fort," said Hiller, when they were all assembled, "the others will be sufficient to punish these red fiends. You'll help us, I suppose?"

This latter question was addressed to Blue Cap, who, with his comrades stood armed, and ready to mount.

"Ready, sir," answered the trapper promptly.

Hiller looked round with a gleam of satisfaction on the stalwart forms of his guests, as they stood each at his horse's head examining the state of his weapons, or securing more firmly some portion of his costume.

"Mount! mount!" shouted Parkhurst, galloping at that moment through the gateway, and dashing away in the direction of the forest.

"Stay!—my sketchbook!" cried Arthur, in an agony, at the same time dropping his reins and his gun, and darting back toward the hall of the fort.

"Git on, lads: I'll look after him," said Ralph, with a grin, catching up the bridle of the artist's horse.

Without a moment's hesitation, the remainder of the party turned, and galloped after Parkhurst, who, with the most of his own men, had already well nigh gained the edge of the forest.

In a few seconds Arthur rushed wildly out of the fort, with the sketch-book in one hand and the two blunderbuss-pistols in the other. In leaping on his horse, he dropped the latter; but Ralph picked them up, and stuck them hastily into his own belt.

"Now put that book into its own pouch, or ye'll be fit for nothing," said Ralph, almost sternly.

Arthur obeyed, and grasped the rifle which his friend put into his hand. Then Ralph vaulted into his saddle and ere those who were left behind had drawn the bolts and let down the ponderous bars of the gate of the Mountain Fort, the two horsemen were flying at full speed over the plain in the track of the avengers of blood who had gone before them.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEAD MAN'S PASS.

Crossing the open ground in front of the Mountain Fort, Ralph and Arthur entered the wood beyond, and traversed it with comparative ease, by means of a bridle-path which had been cut there by the fur-traders.

The plain beyond was open and level. Here, in the distance they descried their companions sweeping over the turf, at their utmost speed, and making toward a low hedge that intercepted the view of the more distant country.

They thundered over the green turf of the flowering plains, scattering the terrified grasshoppers right and left, and causing the beautifully-striped ground squirrels to plunge with astonishing precipitancy into their holes, till they came up with the cavalcade, which halted for them on the summit of the ridge.

"Here we are, lads," cried Parkhurst, his flushed face still blazing with wrath, which he made no effort to subdue, and his eyes red with prolonged debauchery, flashing like the eyes of a tiger,—"here we are, too late to cut off the retreat o' these detestable reptiles from the woods, but not too late to circumvent them."

The fur-trader spoke rapidly, almost breathlessly, and pointed to the band of Indians they were in pursuit of, who, observing that their pursuers had halted, also drew rein on the edge of a belt of thick forest that extended for miles into the mountains. They appeared to wait, in order to ascertain what their enemies meant to do.

"The villains," continued Parkhurst, "think we've given up pursuit as hopeless, but they're mistaken—they're mistaken, as they'll find to their cost. Now, mark me, men; we shall turn back as if we had really given in; but the moment we get down into the hollow, out of sight, we'll go as hard as we can bolt up that valley there, and round by the place we call the Dead Man's Pass. It's a difficult pass, but who cares for that? Once through it we can get by a short cut to the other side of that wood, and meet the redskins right in the teeth. They're Blackfoot Indians, I know by their dress; and as they don't belong to this part o' the country, they can't be aware of the pass. But some of us must go back a good way toward the fort, so as to deceive the blackguards, who'll be sure to get on the first hill they can see where we've gone to. Now—away! Stay," he added, in a less commanding tone, "I don't know that my guests are willing to go with us through thick an' thin in this fashion. I've no desire to have unwilling warriors."

"Had we not been *willing*," replied Blue Cap, dryly, "we wouldn't have come even thus far."

"Very good," rejoined Parkhurst, with a grim smile; "then, perhaps since you are so good as to go along with us, you'll make for the head of that valley, and when you come to the Dead Man's Pass I've spoken of, you'll wait there till the rest of us, who are to sham going back to the fort, come up with ye; then we'll go through the pass together, and polish off the redskins."

To this plan Blue Cap assented; so he and his comrades prepared to take the way to the pass, while the men of the fort turned homewards. A triumphant shout from the Indians showed that they imagined the pursuit was given up.

But Parkhurst knew their cunning too well to fall into the mistake of at once concluding that they were thoroughly deceived. He knew that they would send out scouts to dog them, and felt, that if his plan was to succeed, he must put it into execution promptly.

"I've scarce had time to ask your names or where you've come from," he said, on parting from the trappers; "but there'll be plenty of time for that when we meet again. Keep close in the bottom, till the shadow of yonder crag conceals you from view. If the Indians get sight of you, they'll smell the dodge at once and escape us. Perhaps, young man, you'd like to come with *my* party?"

The latter part of this speech was made rather abruptly to Foxtail Ben, who received it with some surprise, and with a distinct refusal.

"I'll stick to my comrades," said he, "till I see good reason ———"

"Well, well, boy — please yourself!" muttered the trader angrily, as he broke away at full speed, followed by his men.

Our trappers instantly turned their horses' heads towards the mountains, and made for the Dead Man's Pass.

Parkhurst's estimate of the cunning of the Indians was but too correct. The instant the fur-traders disappeared behind the ridge, as if on their return homewards, several of their fastest riders were dispatched to the nearest hill, to watch the movement of the enemy. They ascended one which commanded a wide view of the surrounding country, and thence beheld the fur-traders proceeding swiftly back in the direction of the fort. Unfortunately, they also perceived the bottle-brush of Lispenard's steed, as it disappeared behind the crag which already concealed the rest of his comrades from view. One instant later

and the Indians would have failed to make this discovery, for a deep impassable gorge lay between them and the ravine which conducted to the pass. It was but the barest possible glimpse they got of that shabby tail; but it told a tale which they perfectly understood, for they flew back in the utmost haste to warn their comrades, who, knowing the smallness of the party thus sent against them, from the largeness that had shammed returning to the fort, resolved upon executing a counter movement.

They had a shrewd suspicion, from the nature of the country, that the intention of the whites was to get through a pass of some sort and intercept them, and, concluding that this pass must lie at the head of the valley up which the bottle-brush had vanished, they resolved to proceed to the same spot through the gorge that separated the hill from the crag or rocky ridge before referred to.

Promptitude they knew to be everything, so they swept up the gorge like a whirlwind. Thus both parties drew nearer to the chaotic opening styled the Dead Man's Pass,—the trappers, all ignorant of what awaited them there; the savages, bent on giving their enemies an unpleasant surprise.

But, unknown to either, there was a pair of eyes high on a rock above the Dead Man's Pass,—that overlooked the two valleys or ravines, and gazed with considerable interest and curiosity on the two advancing parties. Those eyes belonged to a solitary horseman, who stood on the edge of the wild precipice that overhung the pass. The hunter, for such his leathern dress bespoke him, stood beside his horse, his right arm over its arched neck, and his right hand patting its sleek shoulder. From the position which he occupied he could see without being seen. His magnificent steed seemed to be aware that danger was at hand, for it stood like a statue, absolutely motionless, with the exception of its fine fiery eyes. Whatever this solitary hunter's thoughts regarding the two approaching parties might be, it was evident that he meant to remain an invisible spectator of their doings; for he stood in the same attitude of statue-like attention until they reached the heads of the two ravines, where they were separated from each other only by the pass. Here, on the one side, the Indians, about forty in number, lay in ambush among the rocks prepared to surprise and attack the trappers when they should pass. On the other side the trappers halted, and, dismounting, allowed their horses to graze, while they awaited the arrival of Parkhurst and his party.

"They won't be long o' comin'," remarked Blue Cap, seating himself on a stone and proceeding to strike a light. "That fellow, Parkhurst, an't the man to waste time when he's out after the red-skins. I only hope he won't waste life when he gets up to them."

"So do I," said Ralph the Roarer, seating himself beside Blue Cap, and carefully cutting a small piece of tobacco into shreds by means of a scalping-knife. "A sartin amount o' punishment is needful, d'ye see, to keep 'em down; but I don't like slaughterin' human bein's unnecessary like."

"I'd skiver 'em all, I guess—every one," observed Black Butcher, angrily. "They're a murderin', thievin' set o' varmints, as don't desarve to live nohow!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Pierre, in disgust; "you is most awfer fully unfeelosophicale, as Ralph do say. If dey not fit far live, for fat vas dey made? You vicked man!"

Black Butcher deigned no reply.

"I'm off to look at the pass," cried Foxtail Ben, vaulting suddenly into the saddle.

"Come, Arthur; you'll go with me, won't you, and see if we can find some wild cats in it?"

The artist, who had not dismounted, merely replied by a nod and a smile, and the two reckless youths galloped away, heedless of Ralph's warning not to go too far, for fear that they should find something worse than wild cats there.

The Dead Man's Pass, through which they were speedily picking their steps, in order to get a view of the country beyond, was not inappropriately named; for it seemed at at the first glance of those who entered it, as if no creature less than a disembodied ghost could, by any possibility, get through it.

The greater part of it was the ancient bed of a mountain torrent, whose gushing waters had, owing to some antediluvian convulsion of nature, been diverted into another channel. The whole scene was an absolute chaos of rocks which had fallen into the torrent's bed from the precipice that hemmed it in on the west, and these rocky masses lay heaped about in such a confused way, that it was extremely difficult to select a pathway along which the horses could proceed without running a risk of breaking their limbs. The entire length of the pass could not have been more than a quarter of a mile, yet it took Foxtail Ben and his companion full half-an hour to traverse it.

When about half through the pass, Ben, who led the way, drew up on a small rocky elevation, from which he could survey the amphitheatre of rugged and naked rocks in the midst of which he stood.

"Upon my word, Arthur," he said, gazing round, "if Bunyan had ever been in the Rocky Mountains, I think he would have chosen such a spot as this for his castle o' Giant Despair.

"I know not," replied Lispenard with a deep sigh, as he drew rein, "what Bunyan would have done, but I know that Giant Despair has already located himself here, for he has been trying to take possession of my bosom for at least twenty minutes. I never rode over such ground in my life. However, it ill becomes pioneers to be overcome by such a giant, so pray push on; I feel quite eager to see what sort of region lies beyond this gloomy portal."

Ben laughed and turned to continue the scramble; Arthur removed his brigandish hat, wiped his heated brows, replaced the hat firmly thereon, and dro e his heels violently against the ribs of his horse, an act which induced the patient quadruped to toss its head and shake its bottle-brush ere it condescended to move on. It was quite evident that, although Arthur spoke in a half jesting tone of Giant Despair, he was in reality much delighted with the singularity of this extemporized and interesting ramble.

"I say, Arthur, don't you like this sort o' thing?" inquired Foxtail Ben, looking back at his companion, on reaching a somewhat level part of the pass.

"Like it? Ay, that do I, Ben. There is a freedom, a species of wild romance about it, that is more captivating than I can describe."

"Look out, or you'll go romancing into that hole, if you don't have a care," cried Ben, turning aside to avoid the danger referred to. They proceeded through the remainder of the pass in silence, as the rugged nature of the ground required their undivided attention.

Had there been a sprite in that place, who could have hopped invisibly to some elevated pinnacle, or have soared on gossamer wings to the air so as to take in a bird's eye view of the whole scene, he would have noted that while Foxtail Ben and the artist were toiling slowly through the Dead Man's pass, the solitary hunter before referred to regarded their proceedings with some surprise, and that when he saw that they were bent on going quite through the pass, his expression changed to a look of deep concern.

With slow and gentle hand this man backed his quiet and docile horse deeper into the bush; and when he had got so deep into the shade of the forest, as to be perfectly safe from observation, he leaped on its back with a single bound, and galloped swiftly away.

A few minutes after the occurrence of this incident, Ben and his friend emerged from the pass and trotted out upon a level plain whence they obtained a fine view of the magnificent country beyond. The pass from which they had just issued seemed to be the entrance to the heart of the Rocky Mountains. The plain, or rather the plateau, on which they stood, was a level spot covered with soft grass, free from bushes, and not more than a hundred

yards in extent. On three sides it was encompassed by inaccessible precipices and rocky ground, in the midst of which the opening out of the pass was situated.

On the fourth side it was skirted by a dense thicket of bushes that formed the entrance to a magnificent forest which extended for several miles in front of the spot. Beyond this spot the scene was broken by hills and valleys, and little plains, richly diversified with wood and water—the former in dense masses, scattered groups and isolated clusters; the latter shining in the forms of lakelet and stream, or glancing snow-white in numberless cascades. Beyond all, the dark blue masses of the Rocky Mountains towered up and up, hill upon hill, pile upon pile, mass on mass, till they terminated in distant peaks, so little darker than the sky that they seemed scarcely more solid than the clouds with which they mingled and blended their everlasting snows.

"Aint it beautiful?" cried Ben, riding forward with a bounding sensation of inexpressible delight.

Arthur followed him, but did not answer. He was too deeply absorbed in the simple act of intently gazing and drinking in the scene to listen or to reply.

At the precise moment in which Ben made the above remark, his quick eye observed a spear-head which one of the savages, hid among the bushes there, had not taken sufficient pains to conceal.

Ben was a young hunter, and, as yet, an inexperienced warrior; but from childhood he had been trained, as it were, in spirit, by the anecdotes and tales of the many hunters who had visited Pine Point settlement. His natural powers of self-control were very great, but he had to tax all these powers to the uttermost to maintain his look of animated delight in the scenery unchanged, after making the above startling discovery. But Ben did it! His first severe trial in the peril of backwood life had come—without warning or time for preparation; and he passed through the ordeal like a true hero.

It was evident that a spear-handle must necessarily support a spear head; that an Indian probably grasped the former; that, in the present position of affairs, there were certainly more Indians than one in ambush; and that, in all probability, there were at that moment two or three dozen arrows resting on their respective bows, and pointed toward his and his comrade's hearts, ready to take flight the instant they should come within sure and deadly range, were ideas which did not follow each other in rapid succession through his brain, but darted upon the young hunter's quick perceptions instantaneously, and caused his heart to beat on his ribs like a sledge-hammer, and the blood to fly violently to his face.

Luckily Ben's face was deeply browned, and did not show the crimson tide. With a sudden mighty effort he checked the natural look and exclamation of surprise. That was the moment of danger passed. To continue his praise at the lovely scene in gay delighted tones was comparatively easy.

"Isn't it beautiful?" he said, turning his face fully toward the ambushed savages, gazing over their place of concealment with an unconscious joyous air, and sweeping his hand toward the mountains, as if to draw the attention of his companion to them. Ben's only weapon at that moment was the small hatchet he was wont to carry in his girdle. This implement chanced to be in his hand. Placing it carefully in his belt, as though nothing was further from his mind than the idea of requiring to use it at that time, he cried,—

"See, yonder is a mound from which we may get a better view," and trotted to the summit of the spot alluded to. In doing so he placed himself still nearer to the Indians. This was a bold stroke, though a dangerous one, meant to deceive the enemy. After gazing a few seconds from this spot, he wheeled round and walked his horse quickly towards the entrance to the pass. Arrived there, he turned, and pretended that he saw something in the far distance, he shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed for a short time intently, then calling to Authur, who still remained in his original position all unconscious of his danger said:—

"I say, come here; look at yonder splendid lake, It's worth seeing,—*well* worth seeing; and it you don't see it with that *curious light* on it, you'll not care to see it at all."

Ben did not dare, by energy of voice, to force his friend's attention, therefore, the first part of this speech was unheeded; but the reference to a "curious light" had the desired effect. Arthur turned, and rode to join his companion. Getting Arthur into such a position that his own person partially screened him from the Indians, he made the following remarkable speech, from beginning to end, in the gay tones of one who discourses eloquently on the beauties of nature; pointing here and there as he rattled on.

"An't it beautiful? eh! I say, just look at it now!—listen to me, Arthur—attentively, but gaze admiringly at the scene—*at the scene*—oh! man, *do* what I bid ye,—your life hangs on it. *Pretend* to admire it—we're in great danger—but——"

"Eh! what! where?" exclaimed the artist in a tone of intense excitement, at the same time laying his hand on one of his pistols and gazing anxiously all round him.

Alas! poor Arthur. It needed not the acute apprehension of a redskin to understand that you had been told of present danger. Neither did it require much acuteness on the part of Foxtail Ben to divine what was to follow.

Scarcely had the symptoms of alarm been exhibited, when four arrows whizzed through the air and passed close to the persons of the two friends, who instantly turned and made a dash for the entrance of the pass. At the same time the savages uttered a yell and darted after them.

"We'll never be able to escape by the pass," exclaimed Ben, looking behind him hurriedly, as they approached the rocky gorge, "and I declare, there's only four o' them on foot. Come, Arthur, let's make a bold stroke for it. We'll easy break through em."

He reined up so suddenly as almost to throw the horse on its haunches, and wheeling round, darted toward the savages. Arthur followed, almost mechanically.

The Indians offered no opposition, but at that moment another yell rose from the bushes, and about thirty mounted Indians, who had been concealed behind a projecting cliff, sprang forward and closed up the only place of escape with a formidable array of spears. From their not using their arrows it was evident that they wished to capture the white men alive, for the purpose, no doubt, of taking them home to their wigwams, there to put them to death by slow torture with the assistance of their squaws.

Foxtail Ben's spirit rose with the occasion. He uttered a furious cry, flourished his hatchet above his head, and dashed at full gallop toward the line. Seeing this, one of the Indians levelled his spear and rode out to meet him. Arthur's nerves recovered at that moment. He fired both pistols at the advancing savage, but without effect. In despair he hurled one of them violently at the head of the Indian. The missile went true to the mark and felled him. On beholding this the whole body of savages rushed upon the two white men.

One powerful Indian seized Ben by the throat. Before either could use his weapon the horses separated and both fell violently to the ground. Arthur leaped off his horse and sprang to the rescue, but he was instantly surrounded, and for a few seconds defended himself with the butt of his large cavalry pistol with an amount of energy and activity that would have filled those who knew him best with amazement. At that moment there was a clatter of hoofs in the gorge, and a roar or bellow was heard above the din of the fight. All eyes were turned toward the pass, and next moment a solitary horseman leaped over the broken rocks and bounded over the turf toward the combatants.

The aspect of this new comer was something terrible to behold. Both he and his horse were gigantic in size.

The man was dressed in the costume of an Indian, but his hair and beard were those of a white man. The mane and tail of his huge horse were of enormous length, trailing as he swept over the little plain.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WILD HORSEMAN.

The Indians turned to flee, but, seeing only one enemy, they hesitated. In another moment the wild horseman was upon them. He carried a round shield on his left arm and a double-edged sword in his right hand. Two Indians lowered their spears to receive him. The point of one he turned aside with his shield, and the shock of his heavy war-horse hurled horse and man upon the plain. The other he cut the iron head off with a sweep of his sword, and, with a continuation of the same cut, he cleft his opponent to the chin. Turning rapidly, he bounded into the very midst of the savages, uttering another of his tremendous roars of indignation. The suddenness of this act prevented the Indians from using their bows and arrows effectively. Before they could fit an arrow to the string two more of their number lay in the agonies of death on the ground. Several arrows were discharged, but the perturbation of those who discharged them, and their close proximity to the mark, caused them to shoot wide. Most of the shafts missed him. Two quivered in his shield, and one pierced the sleeve of his coat. Turning again to renew his rapid attacks he observed one of the Indians—probably a chief—leap to one side, and turning round, fit an arrow with calm deliberation to his bow. The furious horseman, although delivering his sweeping blows right and left with indiscriminate recklessness, seemed during the *melee* to have an intuitive perception of where the greatest danger lay. The savages at that moment were whirling round him and darting at him in all directions, but he singled out this chief at once and bore down on him like a thunderboldt. The chief was a brave man. He did not wince, but, drawing the arrow to his head as the other approached, let it fly full at his breast. The white man dropped on the neck of his steed as if he had been struck with lightning; the arrow passed close over his back and found its mark in the breast of one of the savages, whose death-yell mingled with that of the chief as, a moment later, the gigantic warrior ran him with a straight point through the body.

The Indians were scattered now. The rapid dash of that tumultuous fight, although of but a few seconds' duration, had swept the combatants to the extreme edge of the woods, leaving Lispenard standing in the midst of dead and dying men gazing with a bewildered, helpless look at the terrible scene. Foxtail Ben lay close by his side, apparently dead, in the gripe of the savage who had first attacked him, and whose throat his own hand had grasped with the tenacity and force of a vice.

Most of the Indians leaped over the bushes and sought the shelter of the thick underwood, as the tremendous horseman, whom doubtless they now deemed invulnerable, came thundering down upon them again; but about twenty of the bravest stood their ground. At that moment a loud shout and a fierce "hurrah!" rang out and echoed hither and thither among the rocks; and, next instant, Black Butcher, followed by Ralph and his friends, as well as by Parkhurst and his whole party, sprang from the Dead Man's Pass, and rushed furiously upon the savages, who had already turned and fled toward the wood for shelter. The whole band crossed the battle-field like a whirlwind, leaped over or burst through the bushes, and were gone,—the crashing tread of their footsteps and an occasional shout alone remaining to assure the bewildered artist, who was still transfixed immovable to the ground, that the whole scene was not a dream.

But Arthur was not left alone on the bloody field. On the first sound of the approach of the white men to the rescue, the strange horseman,—who, from the moment of his bursting so opportunely on the scene, had seemed the very impersonation of activity and colossal might,—pulled up his fiery steed; and he now sat gazing calmly into the forest in the direction in which the Indians and traders had disappeared.

Stupified though he was, Arthur could not avoid being impressed and surprised by the sudden and total change which had come over this remarkable hunter. After gazing into the woods, as we have said, for some minutes, he quickly dismounted, and plucking a tuft of grass from the plain, wiped his bloody sword, and sheathed it. Not a trace of the late ferocity was visible. His mind seemed to be filled with sadness, for he sighed slightly and shook his head with a look of deep sorrow, as his eyes rested on the dead men. There was a mild gravity in his countenance that seemed to Arthur incompatible with the fiend-like fury of his attack, and a slow heaviness in his motions that amounted almost to laziness, and seemed equally inconsistent with the vigor he had so recently displayed, which was almost cat-like, if we may apply such a term to the actions of so huge a pair as this man and his horse were.

A profusion of light brown hair hung in heavy masses over his Herculean shoulders,—and a bushy moustache and beard of the same color covered the lower part of his deeply browned face, which was handsome and mild, but eminently masculine, in expression.

Remounting his horse, which seemed now to be as quiet and peaceble as himself, this singular being turned and rode toward that part of the wood that lay nearest to the wild rocky masses that formed the outlet from the pass.

On gaining the verge of the plain he turned his head full round, and fixed his clear blue eyes on the wondering artist. A quiet smile played on his bronzed features for an instant, as he bestowed upon him a cheerful nod of farewell. Then, urging his steed forward, he entered the woods at a slow walk, and disappeared.

The heavy tramp of his horse's hoofs among the broken stones of the rugged path had scarcely died away, when the distant tread of the returning fur-traders broke on Arthur's ear. This aroused him from the state of half-sceptical horror in which he gazed upon the scene of blood and death in the midst of which he stood. Presently his eye fell for the first time, upon the motionless form of Foxtail Ben. The sight effectually restored him. With a slight cry of alarm he sprang to his friend's side, and kneeling down, endeavored to loosen the death-like grasp with which he still held the throat of his foe. The horror of the poor artist may be imagined, when he observed that the skull of the Indian was battered in, and that his young comrade's face was bespattered with blood and brains.

Just then several of the trappers and fur-traders galloped upon the scene of the late skirmish.

"Hallo! Mr. Lispenard, here you are; guess we've polished 'em off this time a few. Hey! wot's this?" cried Black Butcher, as he and some of the others leaped to the ground and surrounded Arthur. "Not *dead*, is he?"

The tone in which the Yankee trapper said this betrayed as much rage as regret.

The bare idea of his young comrade having been killed by the savages caused him to gnash his teeth with suppressed passion.

"Out o' the way, lads; let me see him," cried Ralph, who galloped up at that moment, flung himself off his horse, pushed the others aside, and kneeling at his side, laid his hand on Foxtail Ben's heart.

"All right," he said, raising the youth's head, "he's only stunned. Run, Pierre, fetch a drop o' water. The horse that brained this here redskin, by good luck, only stunned Ben."

"Ah! mon pauvre enfant!" cried Pierre, as he ran to obey.

The water quickly restored Ben, and in a few minutes he was able to sit up and call to remembrance what had passed. Ere his scattered faculties were quite recovered,

the fur-traders returned, with Parkhurst at their head.

"Well done, Snake-Eye Sol," cried Hiller, as he dismounted. "Not badly hurt, young man, I trust."

"Oh! nothing to speak of. Only a thump on the head from a horse's hoof," said Foxtail Ben; "I'll be all right in a little time."

"Did you say anything about Snake-Eye Sol?" he added earnestly.

"To be sure I did; but for him you and Mr. Arthur would have been dead men, I fear. Did you not see him?"

"See him? no," replied Ben, much exetted. "I heard a tremendous roar, but just then I fell to the ground, and remember nothing more that happened."

"Was that quiet grave-looking man Snake-Eye Sol?" inquired Arthur, with a mingled feeling of interest and surprise.

This speech was received with a loud burst of laughter from all who heard it.

"Well, I've never seed Snake-Eye Sol till to-day," said one, "though I've often heer'd of him, but I must say the little one glimpse I got didn't show much that was mild or grave.'

"I guess your head's been in a swum, stranger," said another, "I've only seed him this once, but I don't hope to see him again. He ain't to be trusted, he ain't, that feller."

"And I've seen him five or six times," added Hiller, "and all I can say is, that twice out of the five he was like an incarnate fiend, and the other three times—when he came to the Mountain Fort for ammunition—he was as gruff and sulky as a bear with the measles."

"Well, gentlemen," said Arthur, with more emphasis in his tone than he was want to employ, "I've seen this man only once, but I've seen him under two aspects to-day, and all that I can say is, that if that was really Snake-Eye Sol, he's not quite so wild as he gets credit for."

On hearing this Foxtail Ben rose and shook himself. He felt ill at ease in body and mind. The idea of Snake-Eye Sol having actually saved his life, and he not seen him, was a heavy disappointment, and the confused conflicting accounts of those who had seen him, combined with the racking pains that shot through his own brain, rendered him incapable of forming or expressing any opinion on the subject whatever; so he said abruptly:—

"It's of no use talking here all night, friends. My head's splittin', so I think we'd better encamp."

Ben's suggestion was adopted at once. Provisions had been carried with them from the fort. The dead bodies of the Indians were buried; a spot at some distance from the scene of the fight was chosen. The fires was lighted, supper was devoured and a watch set, and soon Foxtail Ben was dreaming wildly in that savage place about Snake-Eye Sol!

CHAPTER X.

LILIAN.

NEXT day the fur-traders prepared to return to the Mountain Fort, and the trappers to continue their journey into the Rocky Mountains.

At the period of which we write, the fur of the beaver was much in demand in the European markets, and trappers devoted much of their time to the capture of that sagacious animal. From Hiller, Blue Cap learned that a journey of eight or ten days to the south-eastward would bring them to a country that was reported to be much frequented not only by the beaver, but by many other fur-bearing and wild animals; so it was resolved that, having brought their traps and supplies with them, the trappers instead of returning to the fort, should part with their entertainers at the spot where the skirmish had occurred, and make for that hunting-ground as quickly as possible.

"I suppose you don't want to part company with us yet, Mr. Lispenard," said old Blue Cap, as they were about to start.

"By no means," replied the artist quickly, "I have no intention of quitting you—that is, if you do not find me a burden on your hands;" he added with a sad smile.

"A burden!" cried Ralph, in surprise, "I tell ye wot, sir, I consider yer company a honor."

"So you won't return with us, young man?" said Parkhurst to Foxtail Ben, as he mounted his horse, "I'm in want of a stout young fellow, and you'll like the life."

"I thank ye, sir, for your good opinion," returned Ben, "but my mind's made up, I'll stick by my comrades; I like trappin', but I don't like tradin'—though I'm obliged to you for bein' so pressin' all the same."

The two parties bade each other adieu and seperated—the one retracing its way through the Dead Man's Pass; the other, with old Blue Cap at its head, descending into the beautiful country that has been briefly described in the last chapter.

Six quiet and peaceful weeks now succeeded to the stormy period that had just passed. During this time they wandered pleasantly about in as beautiful a region of the world as the heart of man could wish to dwell in. They reached this country after several days' travel. After arriving they moved about from one beautiful spot to another, setting their beaver-traps in the streams, and remaining a longer or shorter time at each place, according to their success in trapping and hunting.

The country was of so peculiarly diversified a formation, that, within the compass of ten miles, every possible variety of scenery existed,—from the level stretch of prairie to the towering snowpeaks of the mountains; from the brake-encompassed swamp, in which the frogs, ducks, geese, plover, and other denizens of the marshes maintained perpetual jubilee, to the dry bush-dotted mounds and undulating lands, where the badger delighted to burrom in the sandy soil, while in other places, the wolf, the fox, and the grisly bear prowled amid the dark recesses of the forest.

If was truly beautiful and a preëminently enjoyable region, and, in the midst of it, under the spreading branches of a magnificent pine, which grew on the top of a little mound that commanded an extensive prospect on every side, the trappers pitched their camp, and began their campaign against the fur-bearing animals that dwelt there.

It was a fine Sunday morning when our trappers arrived at the tree above referred to. They had encamped the previous night on a swampy piece of ground, having travelled too late to afford time to search for a better spot, so that they were glad to rise and push forward at the peep of day on Sunday. But when, in the course of a couple of hours, they reached the dry country, they at once proceeded to encamp.

The weather had grown suddenly cold, and the landscape presented a wintry aspect.

Snow had fallen; but they were prepared for this, and donned their snow-shoes.

Independently altogether of the delight connected with the contemplation of the wonderful scenes in the wilderness—especially of that beautiful portion of the wilderness—the trappers experienced a sensation of intense pleasure in the simple act of physical repose after their long, restless, and somewhat exciting journey. They wandered about from spot to spot, from hill to hill, in a species of charming indolence of body, that seemed to increase, rather than to diminish, the activity of their minds. Sometimes they rambled or rested on the snowy slopes in groups, sometimes in couples, and sometimes singly.

Foxtail Ben and the artist sauntered about together, and conversed with animated fluency and wandering volubility—as young minds are wont to do—on things past, present and to come; things terrestrial and celestial. In short,

there was no subject, almost, that did not get a share of their attention, as they sauntered by the frozen brook or over the whitened plain, or stood upon the mountain side. They "tried every thing by turns, and nothing long," and among other mental occupations, they read together; for Arthur found that Ben carried his mother's Testament in an inner breast-pocket of his hunting-shirt, and Ben discovered that his friend had a small copy of the Bible—also a mother's gift—which shared the pouch of his leather coat with the well-known sketch-book. They conversed freely and somewhat boldly on what they read, and we doubt not that our learned divines, had they listened to the talk of the youthful pioneer and the young hunter, would have been surprised, perhaps edified, by the simple, practical, common-sense views promulgated by those raw theologians. Certainly, anyone listening to the grave, kindly, philosophical commentary of Foxtail Ben, would never have believed in the truth of that statement at the commencement of this story, wherein it is asserted somewhat positively that "Foxtail Ben was mad!"

Ralph the Roarer, Black Butcher, and Pierre Cassecon, drew naturally together and speculated, after their own peculiar fashion, on every subject of thought within the reach of their capacities; and as Ralph's capacities embraced a pretty wide range, the "feelosophical" views he set forth upon that lovely day were so varied, so eccentric, so graphic, and so apparently inexhaustible, that he effectually quelled Pierre's inveterate tendency to jest, and filled Black Butcher with deeper admiration than ever.

As for Blue Cap and the Indian, they wandered about in sympathetic silence, broken ever and anon by the old trapper passing a remark upon some interesting peculiarity of a leaf, an insect, or a flower. It has been said that as men grow older they find deeper pleasure in the contemplation of the minute things of nature, and are less desirous than they were wont to expatiate on the striking and the grand. What truth there is in the remark we can not tell; but, certain it is, while the younger men of the party seemed to cast longing, admiring, and gladsome looks over the distant landscape, and up at the snow and cloud-encompassed heights of the Rocky Mountains, old Blue Cap bent his eyes, we might almost say lovingly, on the earth. He would sit down on a stone, and pluck a leaf, which he would examine with minute care; or watch with the deepest interest the frantic efforts of a little ant, as it endeavored to dislocate and carry off the leg of a long-deceased beetle or grasshopper.

While Foxtail Ben and Arthur Llspenard were wandering slowly together through a piece of woods, they saw, in a glen beyond, a tall man leaning against a rock and, seemingly, lost in contemplation.

He was first observed by Ben who was walking ahead and occasionally peering through the snow vistas, probably on the look out for redskins.

Ben motioned silently to Arthur, who came to his side, and also saw the stranger. Ben perceived that his companion started, changed color, and then looked a little anxious.

In fact, Arthur seemed uneasy at Ben's presence; and, then, for the first time, the latter began to suspect that the artist had some ulterior object in visiting the great Nor'West, besides drawing pictures.

Believing that Arthur wanted to get rid of him, Ben made an excuse to speak to Black Butcher, who was just visible in the distance, and marched off in that direction, asking the artist to wait till his return.

No sooner was Foxtail Ben out of sight, than the artist gave a peculiar whistle, and the gigantic individual left the rock against which he had been reclining and advanced with rapid strides towards the young man.

It was plainly evident, therefore, that the stalwart stranger had been fully cognizant of Arthur's near proximity, and had only been waiting till the coast should be clear in order to join him.

On came the gigantic hunter, for such he evidently was, his shaggy head bound round with a toque and his rifle slung at his back, with hatchet and pistols in his belt. His moccasins were red as blood, and his leggings had evidently been spattered by the ruddy fluid quite recently.

In brief, if Foxtail Ben had tarried a little longer, he could not have failed to recognize in the new comer, the renowned "Snake-Eye Sol," of whom he had heard so much, and whose prowess he had witnessed.

But now Snake-Eye Sol appeared not in the guise of an invincible warrior, but in that of a friend.

Holding out his hand to the artist, he said: "We meet at last!"

The youth just touched the proffered hand with the point of his fingers and said: "Is it peace between us, or is it war?"

"She is come," was the answer.

"How!" cried the other, starting back and gazing in the face of the stern warrior, "come, and not at the fort!"

"Not while the brute, Parkhurst, 'bides there. I would not trust her unsuspecting innocence in the power of that rude ruffian."

"Well said, man," responded the artist.

"Neither, sir, do I think it convenient for *you* to trust implicity to such men as you find at the fort. Should this Parkhurst discover who you are—that in the simple guise of an artist you conceal the heir of one of the oldest and proudest families in the country, and that you are one of the most influential men in the States, God only knows what the villain might not attempt, crazed as he is with drink more than half the time."

"Say you so? I never thought of that. But, let that topic rest for the present. You say that Lilian has come; where have you bestowed her? At another time, I will ask how you contrive to get her away from her father's roof."

The warrior hesitated a moment, but resumed at last:—

"You asked if there was peace between us. In so far as the fulfillment of my part of the contract is concerned, there is peace. You have engaged to—"

"To influence the President of the United States in your favor, and to overlook the injuries which your conduct brought upon my family. I will fulfill my part of the agreement. Once more, where's Lilian?"

"Lilian, for good reasons—"

"No riddles, if you please," interrupted the incognito.

"You will find all right, sir," resumed Snake-Eye Sol; "I have more to do with this affair than you imagine."

"Say you so?" demanded the other, with a look of surprise; "then tell your story in your own way; but, while we are talking, let's proceed that every moment may be bringing me nearer the girl of my heart."

They set out, walking over the snow.

"You know, sir, that I am under sentence of death for scuttling my ship on the high seas, for the purpose of defrauding the under-writers."

"Well—proceed, Captain Thompson; that's an old story."

"Not so old as I wish it was," replied the Captain, alias Snake-Eye Sol; "but, being under sentence of death, I did not care to bring my daughter"—

"Your daughter!" exclaimed the gentleman, stopping suddenly and staring Sol full in the face.

Sol suddenly started. He saw that he had committed himself, and changed the subject.

"Come, here is a deer I shot this morning. It is growing dusk. We will build a little fire and have some coffee."

They removed their snow-shoes.

The fire was soon started.

Then, while the old hunter cooked some choice portions of the deer, the artist looked after the coffee, a tin bucket and cups being among Sol's dunnage.

When they had eaten they began to grow more cheerful, and over the third cup of coffee resumed their conversation.

"But, how came your daughter under the roof of a wealthy Spanish officer in Maryland?" demanded the artist.

"That question is easily answered, sir. In the mean

time, let me assure you that Lillian is safe, at the house of a respectable family on the frontier, where I left her to come in search of you."

"This is all like a dream," said the artist, musing.

"And you may think it strange that I made you leave your plantation on the banks of the Mississippi to go on a wild-goose chase to a Western fort."

"How do you explain that?" demanded the planter.

"It was necessary to my own safety. Those who have a description of my person would otherwise have seized me. It was requisite that I should meet you here where I am known only as Snake-Eye Sol. If I could have met you personally, it might have been managed differently, but as our business was all transacted through an agent."

"I understand," interrupted the planter; "and now that we have met, matters are explained. You are the father of Lilian, and there is no obstacle to our marriage."

"Exactly so," said Sol.

"But, I had always supposed that Lilian was the daughter of Senor Alvarez Valmaseda.

"*Sante Virgen del Pilar!*" cried the Captain, laughing; "you must then have given her credit for great facility in acquiring a perfect knowledge of the English tongue!"

"No more then of the Spanish, if an American. She speaks Spanish like a Castilian."

"Ah! that's true. Valmaseda is an educated man, and he has taken care to cultivate the talents of my daughter, who has had the best masters,"

"No one knows that better than myself; and Valmaseda, how did you happen to place your child under his protection?"

"I will then tell you the story of my first meeting with the Senor Valmaseda, in regular order; I was captain of the schooner Firefly at the time. It was on the 19th of November, 1816, several months after the unfortunate battle of Cachiri, which, with the preceding unfortunate ones of Puerta Araguita and Alto de Tanumba had spread such misery over half the globe, that a young man, poorly dressed, left his dwelling in the *Calzada*, of Guadaloupe, at the Havana, and stole, with hasty steps, towards the harbor. It was still dark, for the sun had not yet risen; he slipped through the by-streets and alleys with that instinct with which a chased animal seeks to escape his enemies. When he at last came near to the harbor, a second man glided from behind a heap of coffee-bags and Guinea logwood, gazed at him fixedly for an instant, and then, seizing his hand, drew him towards the hiding-place he had just quitted.

"In a boat were three persons, evidently seamen, one of whom seemed to be an officer—that was myself. As the boat stopped at the shore, he spoke a few words to the boatmen, and then ascended the steps. He cast one more look at the boat, which was again disappearing in the fog, and then turned towards the town.

"A few steps brought me close to a heap behind which the stranger stood, who now came hastily forward, and stepped towards me. My first movement was naturally towards my weapons, for I was in Havana, and the day not yet broke. The young man looked like anything but an assassin. His clothes were worn; his features, though handsome and even noble, were full of trouble. Grief and sickness had evidently dejected a mind which originally had been one of much dignity. With an anxious voice, he asked whether I were not the captain of th schooner from Philadelphia, which was to sail shortly

"I replied in the affirmative.

"The young man's eyes glistened. With a voice trembetween fear and hope, he asked again 'whether he could not have a passage for himself, a female, and two children?

I scanned him sharply. There was something about the young man, besides his clothes, that seemed inconsistent with his position. Modest, and even humble as his words sounded, there was a certain tone of command in them, which strangely contrasted with his dress and his anxie While his lips trembled, the fire in his eye betrayed indomitable courage.

"'I wished to go to Philadelphia,' he gasped out. 'I will pay for my passage. Here is my money; here is my pass. You are a Captain, what do you desire more?"

"The words were spoken so vehemently, the features of the young man had assumed such a painful expression of despair, that I shook my head more and more. I gave him a long piercing glance, and was about to pass on.

"The young man grasped me, and held me back with a convulsive, trembling hand.

"'Captain! for God's sake take me with you, and my poor wife and children!'

"'Wife and children!' suddenly exclaimed I, in a softer tone; 'have you wife and children?'

"The words 'wife and children' always touch the soul of an American on the tenderest side.

"'I have both wife and children!' groaned the young man in desperation.

"'You have committed no crime?—you are not trying to escape the laws?' said I, sharply.

"'So may God help me, as I have committed no crime!' replied the young man, raising his hand towards heaven.

"'I reflected for an instant; then I said, 'in that case I will take you; keep your money until you are on board. In an hour at farthest I'm off.'

My entering the cabin introduced me to a young lady whose beauty, added to her nobility of look, tone, and manner, strangely contrasted with the half-ragged young man, her companion. She had with her two lovely children, and like them, was dressed very plainly, but of clothes made of the finest materials.

"I invited them to make themselves at home in the cabin and then ascended the stairs to the deck. A few minutes afterwards, the shouts of the sailors announced that the anchor was being drawn up; and the heavy swaying of the vessel that followed told that it was in motion. We were soon at sea.

"When I tell you that this rescued officer was the Senor Valmaseda, you will no longer wonder that he willingly accepted the charge of poor orphaned Lilian—her mother having died soon after my return—although of course, he knew that I had been sentenced to death for a capital crime, and that in breaking from prison, I had nearly killed my keeper. That I regret; but a man will do anything to save his own life."

"I know," said the planter; and then you took to the bush, became a lone hunter, a desperate man, and finally, you got the sobriquet of Snake-Eye Sol."

"But I would fain return to civilized society, and feel that my neck is safe from the halter. It is only the President of the United States who can give me deliverance and I trust to your high position and influence with the President to procure me a full pardon."

"Doubt me not. We will first visit Lilian—

"Not I, sir. I will put you on her trail; but I may not venture among the white settlers."

Snake-Eye Sol was as good as his word. He gave the distinguished planter the proper direction, and he found his Lilian, whom he married and conveyed to his home on the Mississippi.

The young husband lost no time in applying to the President at Washington, to whom he gave a distinct account of Capt. Thompson's career in forest and prairie, and praised him highly for having rescued many an unfortunate trapper from the torturing flames of the savage.

The President granted a full pardon without hesitation, and Captain Thompson being restored to society and to unrestrained intercourse with his beautiful, amiable, and accomplished daughter, ceased forever to be SNAKE-EYE SOL.

THE END.

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